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President: Mr. Gurirab . . . . . (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

The President: I first give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John Briceño, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment of Belize.

Mr. Briceño (Belize): The Belize delegation, Sir, expresses its satisfaction at your election to the presidency of this very important session.

Like most in our group, Belize is a small country. Although not an island, Belize encounters problems similar to those that beset others in our group. The Belizean economy, already limited in size, is an open one. Our economic destiny is in large measure determined by the prevailing forces of the international economy, forces which are beyond our control. Our already vulnerable low-lying coasts and hundreds of islands are annually threatened by disasters, placing our fragile economy at risk and threatening to destroy our precious environmental resources. Trade liberalization is resulting in continuous shrinkage of our access to already limited preferential markets. These are the issues which the Organization must contend with as we face the challenges of the new millennium.

While there are some inescapable challenges presented to us by Mother Nature, we must question and confront those that are caused by people and institutions. We in the group of small island developing States must ensure that those institutions charged with regulating world trade secure opportunities for our growth and development. They must recognize that the continued sustainability of the developed countries is tied to that of smaller, developing nations.

We the developing countries are aware that economic diversification, although a monumental task, is a necessity. It is never easy to change traditional commodities and methods of production, but we understand the urgency. Our commitment to fair trade compels us to redesign our economies. We are also cognizant of our limited financial and technological resources, factors which handicap us in our diversification process. The Seattle round of trade negotiations to be held under the auspices of the World Trade Organization must be characterized by a willingness to implement the necessary reforms to ameliorate the negative impact on the post-Uruguay agreements. Small island developing States can and should benefit from the effects of globalization and trade liberalization along with our developed partners. This is the greatest challenge of our era.

Because we know that people are a country's most valuable resource, we have placed a high priority on human development. To achieve sustainable development we must ensure the well-being of our people by providing

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them with decent housing, adequate health services, access to clean drinking water, proper education and proper nutrition. We must protect and nurture our youth, incorporating them into our sustainable development plans. We must include women at all levels of our discussion and action. Everyone is needed and should be included in this great endeavour.

To demonstrate our commitment to capacity-building, the Government of Belize, among many other endeavours, has spent the last year increasing our efforts to provide our people with access to better education and the opportunity to take advantage of it.

But we are very aware that we cannot accomplish all our objectives alone. We need the assistance of our more developed partners. In this respect, we must express our concern at the significant decline in official development assistance in recent years.

The preservation of our environment is also crucial to our survival. Large sectors of our populations depend on our seas, along with the resources of our forests and jungles, for their survival. We are constantly trying to stop the destruction of these precious resources. Yet still today, large corporations, which in many instances have more economic power than many States, are willing to destroy our environment in pursuit of economic wealth. Hazardous wastes are constantly being dumped in our oceans and seas; rain forests are being wiped out; and the emission of gases from industrial countries continues to deplete the ozone layer. Belize's extremely valuable barrier reef, which has been declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is under constant threat of destruction from the dumping of waste in international waters, waste that washes onto our reef and our shores. This is a serious situation, and the international community should insist that the relevant regulations be enforced. We must stop the transportation of radioactive and other hazardous materials through the Caribbean Sea. A major catastrophe would have a negative and irreversible impact on our environment. We must do everything possible to protect the Caribbean Sea and to make it a special area in the context of sustainable development.

It has been seven years since we successfully negotiated the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. At Rio the world made a commitment to reduce its emissions of greenhouse gases to levels consistent with those of 1990. Today, however, the levels of emissions, primarily those of the developed world, are much higher. Small island and low-lying developing States suffer the consequences. In 1995 and again in 1998 we experienced major coral-reef bleaching in Belize, caused as a result of abnormally warm sea temperatures. Last year, hurricane Mitch caused tremendous damage to the Central American coastline and to our fragile barrier reef. In the eastern Caribbean, annual hurricanes continue to pose a challenge to development. El Niño and La Niña episodes are getting more intense, exacerbating floods and droughts around the world. These recent catastrophes are the result of the last decade being the warmest of the century.

The international community must reverse this trend by taking immediate action, beginning with our developed partners, which legally committed themselves to stabilizing and lowering their emissions. In addition, we should collectively negotiate agreements to stem the rising trend of emissions and greenhouse gases. We urge our more developed partners to comply with their obligation to provide developing countries with new and additional resources to address climate change.

We are at a crucial point in history. Five years ago we, the members of the group of small island developing States decided that sustainable development was essential to our survival. We believed then, as we do now, that our challenges, among others, were to reduce the vulnerability of small States, provide the mechanisms for sustainable development and improve the capacity needed to foster greater economic independence. To achieve this, international cooperation and support is fundamental. We must move to strengthen our partnerships, to establish trade mechanisms to allow for greater participation by small island developing States, and most important, to renew our support for the Barbados Programme of Action. These actions would be a great cornerstone of true sustainable development.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Danny Wallace, Minister of State at the Department of Environment and Local Government of Ireland.

Mr. Wallace (Ireland): It is an honour for me to address this special session of the General Assembly on behalf of Ireland. I fully endorse the remarks made yesterday by Finland on behalf of the European Union and associated States.

Ireland's history as an underdeveloped State on the periphery of Europe, and our recent intensive development process, give us a valuable insight into

many of the concerns of the small island States. Some major challenges which they face in an acute form, we too have had to deal with. How can small economies, far from major markets, deal with globalization? How does a small island State reconcile valuable tourism promotion with environmental protection? What are the best strategies for developing marine resources and protecting coastal regions? These are familiar to us.

Ireland which, by choice, has no nuclear generating capacity, also faces problems with nuclear waste produced by others and with its subsequent reprocessing. We all know and fear that an accident in the transshipment of such waste would have devastating consequences for the marine ecosystems of the small islands affected.

We have a natural affinity with other small islands, most particularly islands confronted with severe poverty and high unemployment. Over the past five years, the small island developing States have made a tremendous effort to achieve sustainable development. We are therefore engaged in and committed to the Barbados Plan of Action and its implementation.

Ireland's programme of development assistance is increasing steadily. We have trebled our official development assistance expenditure since Rio and are committed to making further steady progress towards the United Nations target figure of 0.7 per cent of gross national product.

The Barbados Programme of Action and the preparations for this special session have produced a wealth of useful material. We have identified the challenges, and we have produced the strategy. What is now needed is specific, concerted action and measurable results.

The documents before us reflect the complexity of the problems facing communities which are often remote and underdeveloped, with limited land and natural resources, and which are heavily dependent on fragile ecosystems. These vulnerable peoples need the express solidarity of the international community if they are to survive and prosper.

Globalization and the rapid development of electronic commerce can be grasped as helpful instruments to diminish the handicap of distance, providing the appropriate strategies are put in place at the national level. However, there is also a danger that poor communities, ill-equipped to take advantage of the new technologies, could be further marginalized. Small island States could be especially at risk. We recognize the potential benefits of the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET) and look forward to its further development.

Ireland is placing a new emphasis on small island States, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, in our overall multilateral development policies. We hope to work further with multilateral development agencies in supporting the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in certain key areas.

For example, on the basis of our national experience, we have a particular interest in trade issues and the integration of developing countries, especially least developed countries, into the global economy. We are already engaged in trade capacity-building projects in the Caribbean and South Pacific, in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

We are also supporting the small island developing States in their partnership with the European Union. The mandate for the post-Lomé negotiations provides that the vulnerability of small island States will be taken into account. As these important negotiations reach their crucial stages, we will be there, working to ensure that agreement is reached in such key areas as trade, investment, commodities and financial cooperation. The European Union's partnership with small island States, anchored in the Lomé Conventions, must continue to operate successfully.

In considering the challenges facing small island States, the word vulnerability inevitably and frequently arises. Thankfully, the international community now comprehends much more fully that many of these islands are particularly vulnerable. At the same time, however, there is a worrying lack of precision as to what is meant by vulnerable. We must also clarify and define the relationship between assessed vulnerability and international development assistance resources.

The Barbados Programme of Action called for work on indices that reflect small island States' economic vulnerability and ecological fragility. We welcome and support all the work and progress which has been made to date. We particularly welcome the Committee for Development Policy's recognition that vulnerability should be taken into account in the least developed country classification.

However, the matter is complex. Further analysis is required before indices, and the uses to which they might be put, can be agreed. We believe it would be useful for

all participants in this area, including the relevant United Nations bodies, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank, the affected small island States and statistical experts, to come together to share information and chart the way forward. The next global conference on least developed countries, in 2001, should provide a useful forum for assessing progress on the least developed country aspects of this issue.

In examining the challenges of small islands from a global perspective, there is always a risk that we could sight of the core issues in our desire to ensure that every dimension is included. Issues such as poverty eradication, the development of human and institutional resources and closer regional cooperation will remain at the heart of the strategies of small island States to achieve sustainable development.

Human resource capacity is a key component of development. The small island States are characterized by the resilience, independence and courage of their peoples. These talents are being harnessed to develop the institutions which will help these States preserve their unique identities, while also managing the impact of globalization and climate change.

Strong domestic institutions, capable of preparing and implementing sustainable development strategies, are essential. These institutions, and the people behind them, need to capitalize on all the unique human qualities which are the shared strength of island peoples.

As Ireland has found in Europe, regional cooperation is also an important component of development. We support the small island States in their efforts to develop and enhance regional partnerships, including in the development of their regional trade arrangements.

One of the key messages from the small island developing States donor meeting earlier this year was that the international community, in its partnership with these islands, must improve its coordination and delivery. In our cooperation we must emphasize that the Government is in the driver's seat and that it sets the direction. We must not undermine our development cooperation with small, remote and vulnerable communities through a plethora of uncoordinated strategies and programmes. As many of these islands are uniquely vulnerable, it is essential that our partnership with them be coherent and tailored to meet their particular circumstances.

While many of the problems confronting small island States are common problems of development, their front-line exposure to the consequences of climate change is unique. Rising water levels pose a challenge which goes beyond the core issue of development and requires coordinated international action to resolve. The European Union has played a leading role in confronting the climate change process and has consistently argued for the highest possible emission reduction levels. Ireland is fully committed to meeting its own target under the Kyoto commitments and also to contributing to the achievement of the European Union target.

In addition to the impact of climate change, many small islands also suffer natural disasters from cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. The Secretary-General has recently pointed out the sharp increase in the number of such climatic events over the past 30 years. Such disasters have greatly added to the difficulties of many small communities in their struggle to develop.

Ireland also welcomes the recent decision to improve coordination within the United Nations on issues relating to the oceans and seas. The new coordination process should facilitate improved analysis and the presentation of more coherent and action-oriented proposals to the General Assembly.

This special session of the General Assembly has focused our attention on the major problems and challenges confronting small island developing States. In the years to come, we must continue our urgent common effort to protect and preserve them, particularly the most vulnerable, and to work with them for their sustainable development. At the end of the day, their future development is in their hands. It is our shared responsibility to support them in achieving their goals.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdul-Qader Ba-Jammal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen.

Mr. Ba-Jammal (Yemen) (spoke in Arabic): Allow me to express to you, Sir, the congratulations of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen on your election to the presidency of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. I am full of hope that we will realize some of the progress direly needed at this critical stage in the life of our peoples. I would like to renew to the Commission on Sustainable Development, through you and through the members of the Bureau, the commitment

of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen to work with it to arrive at a successful conclusion of our work.

It is a great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak for a second time on behalf of the Republic of Yemen on an issue closely related to the future of some peoples of the world. In particular, this issue relates to the developing and least developed countries. It deals with the future of people who find themselves in unique and complex geographic situations — such as island States, desert States or hinterland States. However, these situations exist on all continents.

Human beings, ever since they emerged on earth, have never had a choice as to their place of birth or their families or neighbours. Therefore, the international community must improve the life of human beings on this planet, wherever they may be. The international community must provide assistance to those who confront unique and difficult natural challenges and complications of sustainable development.

Our main task is not confined to the challenges posed by nature and geography alone, but also to special and inherited problems resulting from relations between States, peoples and societies. The injustice inflicted upon us by our brethren is more cruel than natural disasters, though the latter wreak havoc on our lives and leave a trail of destruction and suffering.

I believe that most, if not all, the problems that we are addressing today are man-made. They are brought about by conflict of interests and by the different ways of achieving different objectives. They are not always a result of man's struggle with nature.

After achieving its blessed unity in 1990, the Republic of Yemen now has a coastline that stretches more than 2,500 kilometres. Yemen's sovereign territorial waters include more than 133 islands of different sizes and characteristics. Most of these islands are populated or used by Yemeni citizens for fishing or seasonal residences or for temporary marine and communications facilities, in various maritime conditions.

As the coastline of Yemen touches the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, and Yemen's islands are located in all of these gulfs and seas, the Republic's geography makes it a neighbour to many States to the north, south, east and west. Thus, it stands at a crossroads between Asia and Africa.

This means that our concern with the issue of development in small islands or island States is genuine and objective. Our concern reflects Yemen's desire to develop close regional cooperative relationships that involve, *inter alia*, economy, trade, marine issues, development, environmental protection, emigration, culture and tourism. These relationships should be mutually beneficial to the people of the region.

In addressing this subject, we should not be emotional or utopian; rather, we should discuss it from the point of view of using regional partnerships to prepare these States to face the overwhelming torrent of globalization. There is no doubt that violations of human rights and underdevelopment contribute to destroying societies and to causing violence. Although many efforts are being made in the fields of economic and social development, many other efforts are being stymied by lack of technical knowledge and infrastructure, including the weakness or absence of modern administrative capacity.

It is very important to proceed from famine relief efforts to sustainable development. In this way, the international community can improve the capacities of Member States and achieve balanced partnerships.

Resolving to deal with these problems will put the Commission on Sustainable Development in greater touch with the basic needs of societies. We have to avoid quick fixes. We need to develop basic infrastructures that can address our problems. At the same time, the current situation obliges us to increase our overall effort, but our capacities will always fall short of our needs. The burdens that we face will always be among the basic criteria of sustainable development. We support all efforts to find a solution within a supportive international environment.

We appeal to the international community and all its agencies and bodies to contribute positively to the efforts of Governments and peoples, including the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Yemen, to achieve sustainable development. Let us make this a real partnership that reflects positively on everyone.

In conclusion, we hope that this session will lead to the achievement of its noble and humanistic objectives. We also hope that the international community will be able to undertake practical steps to turn these objectives into reality.

The President: I next give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Shunmugan Jayakumar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore.

Mr. Jayakumar (Singapore): At the outset, let me associate my delegation with the statements earlier made by the delegation of Samoa, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States, and by the delegation of Guyana, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Five years ago, when we convened the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we recognized how vulnerable island States were to the ebb and tide of international trade and economy. In 1999, many of these same challenges still exist. Some have been made more difficult by the effects of climate change and by the impact of the 1997 financial crisis.

Most island States have small populations, limited human resources, small domestic markets and narrow economic bases. Without natural resources, many tend to be dependent on a single economic activity such as tourism, fisheries or a single commodity. This leaves island States vulnerable.

Yet there has been no lack of commitment on the part of small island developing States in implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and Agenda 21, which arose out of the Earth Summit. More than others, island States understand the importance of protecting the environment. Rising sea levels, resulting from global warming, pose the greatest risks to us. Natural disasters can be most devastating for us.

Singapore has also had to cope with many of the challenges laid out in the Barbados Programme. Our total land area is only 648 square kilometres, but our population is now more than 3 million. The primary challenge has therefore been how best to use the limited land to sustain our economic growth and yet achieve a decent standard of living for our people. Our philosophy has been to take an integrated approach in formulating and implementing programmes that support these various needs. At the same time, we must be nimble enough to adapt to the changing natural and economic environment in which we live.

The management of our freshwater resources has been another challenge. Our long-standing national education campaigns have led to a community-wide effort to encourage water conservation and a sustainable pattern of consumption.

Singapore fully understands, therefore, how small island States have to cope with the numerous development problems, especially human resources development. In the early days of our development, we were fortunate to receive training from developed countries and international bodies. We believe that it is our turn now to help our fellow developing countries through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). Since 1992, more than 8,000 developing country participants have attended training courses in Singapore, ranging from port development and civil aviation to information technology, productivity, environment control and the English language.

However, not many of these participants come from island States. Between 1995 and 1998, only 12 per cent of all Singapore Cooperation Programme participants came from small island developing States. Therefore, over and above our existing SCP courses that are available to small island developing States, I am pleased to announce today a specially customized five-year technical cooperation package of 300 training places for small island developing States. We hope that, through this programme, the participation of small island developing States in the Singapore Cooperation Programme will be boosted. My officials at the Permanent Mission in New York will disseminate more details about the programme.

Singapore believes strongly in South-South cooperation. The spirit of the South is one in which those with the ability to help do so without conditions and without premeditated expectations. The resurgence of technical cooperation among developing countries is a significant demonstration that the countries of the South are dynamic, innovative and resourceful.

In closing, let me urge our developed partners to renew their commitment to helping small island developing States to further implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Baroness Amos, Government Spokeswoman for International Development in the House of Lords of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Baroness Amos (United Kingdom): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address this special session of the General Assembly.

The United Kingdom Government has strong connections with many of the island countries represented here today. We are bound together by a shared history and culture. Our aim is to work in close partnership with small island developing countries towards a sustainable, secure and prosperous future.

The elimination of poverty is the overriding goal of the United Kingdom's international development agenda. Comprehensive as it is, we believe that the Barbados Programme of Action does not stress enough the central importance of the fight against poverty in the quest for sustainable development. Poverty eradication must be at the heart of our efforts to implement the Programme of Action.

Many small island developing States continue to be seriously affected by poverty. Even in some which have achieved middle-income status, there are poor and vulnerable groups which have yet to benefit from their countries' greater prosperity. By making poverty elimination the central objective of our partnership with small islands, we aim to ensure that everyone will benefit. This means carefully targeting our assistance, rigorous analysis of the causes and incidence of poverty, and reaching out to those who have become marginalized within their own countries. We hope that future discussions will pay greater attention to the people who are vulnerable, and seek solutions which will enable them to share the benefits of growth.

In recognition of one of the most pressing needs of small island developing States, our development assistance programme also focuses on the capacity-building and institutional strengthening required to help Governments to meet the needs of their people from health and education through to judicial reform and efforts to combat crime, corruption and illegal drugs.

We know that poverty eradication and sustainable development cannot be achieved by concessional finance alone. Trade is essential and is an area in which many small islands find themselves particularly vulnerable. Not only do they rely on a narrow range of exports, but they are also far from the centres of international decision-making which can have far-reaching impacts on their economies. Many cannot afford representation in Geneva, for instance, and risk missing out on the new opportunities offered by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

To help in this area, we are providing technical assistance to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat to help it negotiate the best deal possible for the region in the successor arrangements to the Lomé Convention. In the Pacific region, we are supporting a multilateral trade adviser at the Forum Secretariat. We have also offered training and technical assistance on the WTO and have led the call for the next WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle to take greater account of the needs of developing countries.

In recent discussions on the future of the banana regime, we have pressed the case of small island producers in an effort to ensure that the outcome recognizes the special vulnerability of those who are heavily dependent on banana production and who have only limited opportunities to diversify into new crops or other productive sectors.

Many speakers have stressed the vulnerability of small islands to climate change. The United Kingdom takes the problem very seriously. At home, we are strengthening our efforts to reduce our own carbon emissions; and in international negotiations, we are working hard to make a reality of the commitments made by the developed countries at Kyoto.

I made reference earlier to the importance of working in partnership. One aspect of partnership is practical help for sustainable development. When aid budgets almost everywhere are failing, I am pleased to say that the United Kingdom's aid budget is growing. The United Kingdom Government pledged to reverse the fall in aid spending and we are keeping our word. We are strengthening our development assistance programmes with our partners amongst the small island developing States and we continue to staff regional offices in both the Caribbean and the Pacific.

The United Nations has already established an ambitious set of international development targets to measure achievements globally. Many small island developing States are preparing their own national sustainable development strategies. Progress in furthering education, in improving health and in protecting the environment while using it wisely — as well as progress in promoting better governance and human rights — can all contribute to the goal of international well-being - the goal of poverty elimination. The British Government will play its full part in helping small islands to achieve this vital objective.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Right Honourable Donald McKinnon, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand.

Mr. McKinnon (New Zealand): As we face the dawn of the new millennium, this special session addresses itself to the situation of small island developing States. At the outset, I would like to offer a special welcome into the ranks of the United Nations to three friends from the South Pacific: Kiribati, Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. We are delighted to see these nations take their place in the ranks of the United Nations. We are confident they will make a valuable and distinctive contribution to the work here.

Our task at this special session is to review progress with the Programme of Action agreed at Barbados, the blueprint for the sustainable development of small island States. In the words of the Declaration, it is to assess what has been achieved through "joint action undertaken with a sense of common purpose and partnership". *(A/CONF.167/9, annex I, part two, section III, para. 4)*

There are a number of issues of major concern to small island developing States at the present time. The effects of climate change and sea-level rise, gaining proper benefits from global trade liberalization, managing tourism so as to win economic benefits without undue damage to cultures, obtaining the flow of external financial resources necessary to achieve those goals and threats from hazardous wastes and marine pollution, just to name a few.

The Barbados Programme of Action proposed national, regional and international responsibilities in addressing these issues. We have undoubtedly made progress in many areas, but there is still a good distance to go to develop more effective partnerships which will assist the small island developing States to achieve sustainable economic development to make the kind of progress necessary to enable them to improve standards of living.

Five years ago we asked a great deal of small islands, and island heads of State at Barbados attested overwhelmingly that they were prepared to make the necessary commitment to their own development. The road, of course, has not been very easy, but that commitment has been evident and clearly still exists today. However, many of those small States have noted a weakening of commitment on the part of their partners in the developed world. At Barbados we entered into a commitment to assist small island developing States, but, as with the commitments we made at Rio, we have not delivered to the extent that both we and the small island States looked forward to at that time.

Achieving partnerships at the international level is a challenging task. It juxtaposes large countries with very small ones, requiring all parties to exercise tolerance and flexibility. In some cases, getting to grips with the smallness of small island developing States can be a challenge in itself for the international financial institutions.

As part of our partnership we must ensure an increase in flows of development assistance. Donor countries must make the greatest possible effort to reverse the decline in official development assistance that occurred in the decade up to 1997, and to reach agreed international targets.

Beyond the level of resources, the donor countries and agencies need to coordinate their approaches with each other, with individual partner Governments and, of course, with regional agencies.

The Rio Summit spelled out for us the facts of global interdependence. The essence of the message was that small islands cannot make it by themselves. Indeed, none of us can, and we fail to grasp this essential truth at our peril. Global problems such as marine pollution, climate change, sea-level rise and ozone depletion do not recognize national boundaries. Small island developing States contribute least of all to these problems, but they cannot avoid the effects of them; they are likely, in fact, to be the first affected.

By the same token, the rest of the world cannot ignore the unique contribution of small island developing States to global sustainability, through their rich biodiversity, their vast areas of marine resources and their coral reef systems.

The text presented to this session by the Commission on Sustainable Development calls for assistance to those small States in meeting the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities arising from globalization and trade liberalization. It also asks that the international community take more account of the particular environmental and economic vulnerability of small States as called for at Barbados.

The text also calls for the international community to provide new and additional financial resources.

That resolution is 10 years old; 10 years on, the need continues. We have not done enough. We do not need to search for new issues. The key constraints facing small island developing States have already been identified for us, particularly their economic and ecological fragility. We can certainly look at new partnerships, at new ways of working together, but there is no getting around the need for more effort in targeted capacity-building; for additional finance; for transfers of environmentally sound technology; and, of course, for improved coordination.

New Zealand has long had a particular concern for the situation of those States through our Commonwealth and other connections with the island countries of the South Pacific, the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. More than half our bilateral official development assistance is directed to addressing their development needs. In the last year or so, not least as a result of the role my colleague The Honourable Simon Upton played in chairing the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, we have seen the need to put additional official development assistance resources into tackling some of the emerging challenges for those small States: work for better defining and quantifying their vulnerability; support for regional programmes to address growing pressures on water and waste management; and building capacity to deal with legal and governance issues.

I take the liberty, in conclusion, of quoting from an address made by The Honourable Tuala Sale Tagaloa, of Samoa, at the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development last April. After reflecting on what has been achieved to date under the Barbados Programme of Action, The Honourable Tagaloa said,

> "And so, in a spirit of true cooperation let us take the necessary steps to discharge our responsibility to this planet, to each other and to future generations. And let us once again send a powerful message to the world's peoples on the great possibilities that exist when joint action is undertaken with a sense of common purpose and partnership".

That is the challenge we face now.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fritz Longchamp, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Haiti.

Mr. Longchamp (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Some five years ago in Barbados, on behalf of our Governments, we adopted the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, in keeping with the spirit of the Earth Summit and the commitments contained in Agenda 21. Appropriately, this twenty-second special session has been convened a few months from the end of the second millennium to appraise the progress made and identify the obstacles encountered and ways to overcome them.

I note with satisfaction the growing importance that our Governments, international organizations and civil societies attach to sustainable development. There is awareness that the balance between man and the planet is one of the major challenges facing human conscience today. Unfortunately, we must note that despite a considerable number of initiatives, the danger of an ecological disaster is not yet to be ruled out, especially with regard to the small island developing States.

These States, most often tiny territories, suffer generally from a lack of natural resources and often face the problem of demographic explosion, which gives rise to an intensive exploitation of the scarce resources available. Most of these islands are exposed to natural disasters. In the Caribbean archipelago, in particular, our States are regularly swept by hurricanes and cyclones. We are still suffering the effects of the unrepaired damage caused in 1998 by hurricanes Georges and Mitch. In the same region, volcanic eruptions are a major danger. We still remember the disaster that the island of Montserrat experienced two years ago, which for about two weeks almost emptied the island of its population.

We also note with sorrow that desertification is gaining ground in many areas. People deprived of water and other vital resources for survival continue to swell migratory flows, thus destabilizing the social balance in towns and especially in large cities. While progress in democratic systems and the stability of political systems are considerably reducing the number of political refugees, here at the turn of the century the number of economic and environmental refugees is unfortunately growing at an alarming rate.

For our part, in spite of real structural weaknesses, the Republic of Haiti believes that the rights to education, health and life in a safe and healthy environment rank among fundamental human rights. Thus, we have applied the commitments of Agenda 21, and Haiti is proceeding at its own pace in sustainable development. At the institutional level, the creation in 1995 of a Ministry for the Environment, a Ministry for the Status of Women and a Secretariat of State for Population has provided new

momentum for initiatives for the protection of biodiversity and the development of human resources.

We recognize that these are very limited initiatives, because of the precariousness of resources allocated and the impossibility of achieving sustainable development through actions that are geographically isolated and not very well coordinated. This is why the Republic of Haiti intends to actively participate in the various regional and global mechanisms of cooperation for the realization of the commitments outlined in Agenda 21.

As President of the Council of Ministers for the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), I welcome the regional commitment to support public and private efforts for the protection and conservation of the environment and the natural resources of the Caribbean Sea.

At the second summit of the Association of Caribbean States, in Santo Domingo in April of this year, our heads of State or Government agreed to support the efforts of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) so that the Caribbean Sea would be declared a special zone in the context of sustainable development. This sea is a truly invaluable asset for the sons and daughters of our particular region, and we cannot neglect the vital need to denounce the risks of its ecological deterioration. The region continues to be used for the transportation of toxic and nuclear wastes, which cruelly endanger flora, fauna and human life. Considering the serious repercussions that this kind of deterioration can have on the rest of the planet, we hope that this special session will invite Governments, organizations within the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and the international community in general to support this Caribbean initiative in the context of sustainable development.

Human beings have to be at the centre of any sustainable development programme. It is from this viewpoint that the Haitian Government advocates that special attention be given to the most vulnerable sectors of our populations. In this regard, the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is of great significance in the context of globalization, in which a number of societies are threatened by marginalization.

We congratulate the Commission on Sustainable Development on the considerable work that it has already carried out, and the Government of Haiti expresses the wish that the Programme of Action will be expanded in all its dimensions for the greatest welfare of humankind in general and for future generations in particular.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Souef Mohamed El-Amine, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Comoros.

Mr. El-Amine (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the Assembly and pay tribute to the Commission on Sustainable Development for its efforts in arranging this meeting.

The attention given to small island developing States has led to the organization of a number of meetings because of the need to promote sustainable development on a global basis that takes into account the unique economic and environmental conditions that characterize the economies of small island developing States.

The Rio Conference and the Barbados Conference obviously fall within this framework. While we recognize that the promotion and practice of sustainable development have become a global priority, we must also agree that the concrete application of these principles in small island developing States is crucial, in the light of the interdependence and close connection between development and environment.

Accordingly, problems such as the continuing deterioration of our marine, coastal and forest environments, energy problems, the vulnerability of these States to external impacts on their economies, the lack of resources, the dumping of toxic waste in the seas and oceans, the effects of globalization and trade liberalization and ecological changes must be constantly borne in mind when we deal with the question of sustainable development. In short, the small island developing States represent a particular case, both from the environmental standpoint and from that of development.

It is clear that we all share the same concerns with regard to the problems facing our countries. My country, the Comoros, shares these environmental concerns. A detailed environmental analysis demonstrates that the Comoros, because of the volcanic nature of its terrain, its small size and the fact that it is made up of many islands, have a particularly unique character is reflected in the diversity of landscape and the rich biodiversity. The national policy on the environment supports the integration of the environmental dimension within the

country's political process and economic development, in order to ensure sustainable and rational management of existing resources and to define and strengthen sectoral policies.

However, these efforts come up against serious problems of all kinds. Because of this, our environmental policy is aimed, first, at ensuring sustainable and rational management of resources. It also is aimed at defining and strengthening sectoral policies in the realm of territorial development, revision of the landholding system, defining a water policy and defining and applying a policy of sanitation and waste management. We must also improve the legislative tools and regulations to develop regional and international cooperation along these lines, ratify all international and regional conventions on the environment and provide for a follow-up mechanism for national policies in these areas.

Within the context of the application of this policy, my country has adopted a support programme for associations for protecting the environment and a waste management programme. Other actions are also under way.

In the area of maritime security, a regional initiative has brought about a project for cooperation among the countries of the Indian Ocean Commission with regard to rescue at sea and the anti-pollution campaign. This second element is as essential as the first, because the Indian Ocean, a pre-eminent ocean of transit, sees international oil trade plying between the Arabian peninsula and the Cape of Good Hope, and these maritime routes endanger the countries of the region, in particular those situated in the Mozambique Channel.

In addition, a regional plan of action has been established to deal with all the vicissitudes of natural disaster. All these initiatives bring together the necessary conditions for the protection of the environment, with a view to sustainable development. To achieve this, a concerted effort on the part of the State, communities, associations, the private sector and the people is necessary. Moreover, the efforts of our countries must be supported by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to make sure that we have access to financial machinery and adequate financial resources, as well as to strengthen our capacity, particularly in the development of our human potential.

Another area to which we should give attention is that of trade, in particular with regard to agricultural products. Trade in this area is in a precarious situation because of a decline in the terms of trade.

We would request that new negotiations within the World Trade Organization in the area of agriculture should take account of the particular needs of this group of countries in order to prevent liberalization from having a negative impact on their capacity for sustainable economic development.

Future generations depend on the guarantees that we will give them in terms of commitments to be accepted and implemented so that they can aspire to a better life.

May I again express my deep appreciation for the initiative in organizing this meeting in the hope that it will justify the hopes of our respective peoples.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Mr. Aziz (Pakistan): Mr. President, we are indeed delighted to see you presiding over this important special session of the General Assembly.

The peculiar structural and ecological characteristics of the small island developing States make them unique and, at the same time, vulnerable. Their small size, isolation and vulnerability to forces of nature often create insurmountable problems. These factors also magnify the development challenges being faced by these States. The support of the international community thus becomes a vital element in their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

This was recognized by the Rio Conference, which led to the holding of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994. Pakistan actively participated in both these Conferences and is deeply committed to the realization of their goals.

The Barbados Programme of Action provides a blueprint for the sustainable development of small island developing States. While the small island developing States have made serious endeavours to implement the Programme of Action, the international community has, unfortunately, lagged behind in fulfilling its commitments.

It is not merely the issue of financial assistance that leads to the dependence of the small island developing States on global action. The threats of climate change and rising sea level are posing problems which are far beyond the control of these countries and can have disastrous consequences for small islands. The situation becomes worse due to the fact that most of the population of these countries lives in the coastal zones.

The problems of small island developing States are further compounded by the shortage of fresh water, pollution, overfishing, the high cost of energy, certain undesirable consequences of tourism and rising poverty.

The small island developing States have taken various measures to meet these challenges. Yet for them, the prospects are always uncertain. A major hurricane or a cyclone can destroy years of labour in hours. A paradise can be turned into a wasteland in virtually no time.

Long vulnerable to the forces of the sea, small islands are now bracing themselves against the gathering forces of globalization. Small islands are easily swamped by global economic upheavals or recession because they rely on international trade more than most countries, as their limited land mass and resources require that they import virtually everything. To finance these imports, they need to raise foreign exchange through the export of services such as tourism, but in a global recession tourism is one of the first sectors to suffer a serious decline. This leads to a chain reaction that affects all other activities on the island, including industry and trade.

The continued erosion of trade preferences, combined with the steady decline in official development assistance, is having a major impact on the sustainable development prospects of these countries. Most of them recognize that they must restructure their economy. This is, however, a long-term prospect involving large investments and the retraining of major segments of the labour force.

We also need to promote the development of a comprehensive vulnerability index and its objective application. Such a vulnerability index should fully take into account the special circumstances and vulnerability of these countries.

Another important concern of these countries relates to the transboundary movement of hazardous and radioactive waste. It is more than evident that the sentiments expressed in the Barbados Declaration have not been followed by deeds. This lack of action, particularly in the area of climate change, threatens the existence of a significant number of these countries.

Pakistan lends its full support to the initiatives for the further implementation of the Programme of Action contained in the final document of the special session. We also urge the international community, especially the developed countries, to take all necessary measures to promote the sustainable development of these countries.

Unlike other countries, for the small island developing States sustainable development is also a matter of physical survival. Yet they have no control over it. They are dependent on global action. We should make every effort to help these countries achieve what we all believe is critical for their survival and prosperity.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Maraj, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Maraj (Trinidad and Tobago): I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the final session of the General Assembly of this millennium as well as over this special session on small island developing States. Permit me to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, members of the Alliance of Small Island States, to the United Nations community of nations.

Today the question we must ask is, are the small island developing States any better off now than they were five years ago, when we adopted the Barbados Programme of Action? Is their future any more certain? Have the threats which hung over them been removed or lessened? These are the questions we must answer honestly if this special session is to have any real meaning.

The truth is that small island developing States continue to be marginalized from the global economic mainstream. The processes of globalization and liberalization have further accentuated the divide between the rich and the poor of the world. Today over 1.3 billion people are in the category of the poor, earning less than $1 per day. Millions of children have no access to education, millions more have no access to proper health care, and a significant percentage of the deprived of the world belong to the small island developing States. This is the reality since Barbados.

The myth of the level playing field continues to reign, while the reality of small island developing States explodes that myth. How can a small developing island with few or no resources and a small population compete with industrialized continents with large internal markets, advanced technology, market access and sophisticated financial systems? There has been no real attempt during the last five years to deal with this dichotomy.

Three hundred and twelve projects were submitted by small islands at the donor meeting last February, of which 22 were submitted by Trinidad and Tobago. To date, we have had no firm pledges by the donor countries for the implementation of these projects. Is it expected that the small island developing States themselves will mobilize these resources?

The Barbados Programme of Action states that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development, and thus significant attention must be given to projects that will enhance the quality of life in small island developing States. The smallness and vulnerability of small island developing States necessitate that special attention be paid to population issues, education and training, and health for effective human resource development. In these areas, the position of developing States, especially that of small island developing States, continues to be bleak, as much of the social deprivation in the world lies in developing countries.

The statistics show that more than 880 million people lack access to health services; 2.6 billion lack access to basic sanitation; more than 850 million adults are illiterate; more than 260 million children are out of school; and about 840 million people are malnourished. Has a global conscience developed during the last five years to deal with these seemingly intractable problems of underdevelopment? The answer is that callous indifference continues.

The 1999 United Nations *Human Development Report* has been moved to say, on page 7, that

> "The relentless pressures of global competition are squeezing out care, the invisible heart of human development"

and that

> "National and global governance have to be reinvented — with human development and equity at their core."

We of the small island developing States fully share this view. Let us make a strong call at this meeting for the reinvention of global governance, and let us hope that it reverberates throughout the world.

The threat to the security of small island developing States increased during the last five years. Today, our very democracies are under attack. Our coastlines are often open and not well protected, and our limited resources make it impossible for us to provide adequate security measures. We are therefore very vulnerable to predators such as drug traffickers, money launderers and terrorists.

Because of geography, island States of the Caribbean are particularly vulnerable to illicit drug trafficking. It is precisely this problem that led The Honourable Basdeo Panday, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, to note recently that the illegal drug trade undermines democracy; it corrupts officials and institutions; it destroys future generations. It is a cancer eating away at the vitals of our societies and will make narco-democracies of our nations unless our people and nations stand close together and wage war against it.

The countries and territories of the Caribbean have been targeted by this enemy as a transit point for the international trafficking of drugs. Resources that should be allocated to ensuring proper health care, education for children, feeding of our citizens and employment generation have to be diverted to fighting the hydra-headed drug lords. Small island developing States feel particularly powerless in the face of this evil.

Trinidad and Tobago is dismayed at the lack of firm commitment on the part of the international community and donor agencies to live up to the obligations undertaken a mere five years ago in Barbados. There is little but the tedious reaffirmation of commitment, and doubts have arisen as to whether any resources will be forthcoming. Small islands do not bear responsibility for global warming and climate change, yet we are the ones who suffer most. It is our islands which will disappear from the face of the earth if nothing is done by those responsible for this threat to humanity.

The efforts of developed countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases are most inadequate. There is clearly a callous indifference to the preservation of the global ecological balance, and this disregard continues in the face of the dramatic climate changes and

the horrendous natural disasters that we have been experiencing.

Trinidad and Tobago is proud of the fact that in 1993 it introduced on the agenda of the Caribbean Community the idea of opposing the trans-shipment of nuclear and other hazardous wastes through the Caribbean Sea. It is a sign of the continuing disrespect for the small island developing States that this practice continues, even though it has been made very plain that a single accident could totally obliterate our small nations. The threat to our society has increased over the last five years as more and more of these dangerous shipments traverse the Caribbean Sea.

The Caribbean Sea has a unique biodiversity and is a highly fragile ecosystem. It is due to the importance of the Sea for the economic well-being and sustenance of present and future generations, as well as their cultural heritage, that the Caribbean Heads of Government, at their last meeting held in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in July 1999, endorsed the proposal to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

These are not issues for small island developing States alone. One would be foolish or naive to think that geographical separation, economic prosperity or military might could insulate any country or group of countries from the effects of so many millions of people in the world living in poverty, and a large number of the world's community on the brink of either utter economic collapse or ecological devastation. Because it has been done so many times before, it is now almost trite to call for decisive action. One can only hope — and with diminishing hope — that as a new century approaches there will be the dawning of a new realization that this is indeed a global problem of major proportions. All of humanity is threatened.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Yoser Thinley, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): It is indeed a pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly. My delegation is confident that you will lead our deliberations to a fruitful conclusion.

Bhutan, as a small, landlocked, developing country, is here to express our solidarity with and support for the concerns and well-being of the small island developing States. We share many of the same development aspirations, as well as a deep commitment to protecting the global environment. The small island developing States, which constitute over 25 per cent of the United Nations, form a large and important part of the international community. Rich in biodiversity, they are also guardians of a large part of the surface of our galactic island against ever-spiralling threats. Their views and needs must receive the full attention of the international community.

In the five years since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, serious efforts have been made by the island States at the national and regional levels in implementing the Programme of Action. Much of the effort has been centred on integrating sound environmental management into planning sustainable development practices. However, a number of critical constraints impede the implementation of many of the Barbados objectives. Small island developing States on their own are simply unable to shoulder the vast responsibility that falls upon them — the guardianship of the essential global public goods, without increased support from the international community.

We have long agreed that global warming would create serious problems for all countries of the world. For the low-lying small developing countries the outcome could be devastating and is already clear to us. Yet the progress on the negotiation and implementation of the measures for addressing global warming continues to be slow for want of greater international efforts and commitment.

The reports before us state that the marine environment around many small island developing States is deteriorating, aggravated by spills of hazardous wastes, sand extraction, seabed mining and transport of nuclear materials. While the catastrophic implications for the environment and economies of the concerned States are clear, we cannot be unmindful of the larger and long-term consequences for human society in general.

Global economic integration has been a powerful mechanism of growth and development for many countries in the past decade. But for many of the small islands and other small developing countries whose economies are based on few key sectors such as tourism, fishing and mono-crop agriculture, the benefits of globalization have been minimal. Good infrastructure, communications and human resources are important

prerequisites for participation in the global economy. Development of these sectors remains a major challenge in many developing countries.

It is apparent that international support has fallen short of the commitments articulated and foreseen in the Barbados Programme of Action. The continued declining trend in official development assistance will not make it any easier to fulfil these objectives. It is our hope that this special session of the General Assembly will not only review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, but will also be an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to its implementation.

We live in a single global community. The challenges and problems faced by small islands are not theirs alone. It is incumbent upon us, as responsible members of the international community, to take care of our environment and safeguard the future of mankind through the sustainable development of all our nations and peoples.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Domingo Siazon, Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines.

Mr. Siazon (Philippines): At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, we decided to have a common agenda to deal effectively with the related problems of environment and development. We also recognized the need for global partnership, for none of us could accomplish the job alone.

The Barbados Programme of Action, adopted at the conclusion of the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1994, is a document that builds on what we agreed in Rio. It is a plea for sustainable development, particularly that of small island developing States, that deserves the fullest support of the international community.

The Barbados Programme of Action calls for national, regional and international action in 14 priority areas. These range from sectoral concerns such as freshwater, climate change, biodiversity, marine resources and tourism, to cross-cutting issues such as human resource development and the financing and support needed to put the plan into action.

The Philippines fully identifies itself with the aspirations of small island developing States, for it is a nation of about 7,000 islands, many of which are small. Small islands are vulnerable to the capricious onslaughts of nature's fury. They are especially vulnerable to the threat of rising sea levels, and they immediately feel the impact of erratic changes in weather patterns.

Hurricanes Georges and Mitch, for instance, caused extensive damage in the Caribbean. The recent El Niño phenomenon hit the Philippines hard, causing its agricultural sector to decline by 6.7 percent and its gross domestic product to recede by half a percent last year. Tsunamis killed more than 2,000 people and destroyed homes and crops in Papua New Guinea.

Small islands also typify the challenges being faced by many developing countries, such as air and water pollution, vanishing forests, land erosion, depletion of coastal and marine resources, underdeveloped transport and communication facilities, and insufficient human resource development. High rates of population growth and unsustainable tourism development compound their environmental problems.

In the five years since the adoption of the Barbados Programme, tangible progress has been achieved in certain key areas of work. In the conservation of biodiversity, for instance, most small island developing States have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity, and a number of them have begun to prepare country studies on biodiversity and national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

The Bahamas Biodiversity Data Management Project is a landmark achievement. A global review of biodiversity in small island developing States has also been carried out by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has conducted a review of the uses and status of trees and forests in land-use systems in the small island developing States.

The small island developing countries, however, continue to face inadequate financial and human resources for sustained efforts to address not only biodiversity but also other urgent issues of sustainable development.

Turning to the problems of coastal and marine resources management, much remains to be done to address the problems of beach erosion, loss of shoreline, degradation of coral reefs and mangroves, and marine and coastal pollution. The inadequate capacity for efficient disposal of mounting waste compounds these problems. There is also a tremendous need to strengthen

the monitoring and surveillance of fish stocks in the areas around small island developing States, so as to ensure sustainable management of the living marine resources on which their economies depend.

The small island developing States remain highly vulnerable as regards their energy requirements. With most of them totally dependent on imported petroleum for their commercial energy needs, sharp increases in fuel prices stress their economies in a big way. The recourse to wood for household fuel, coupled with deforestation due to logging or conversion to agriculture, exacerbates their already serious soil erosion and freshwater supply problems. They need enhanced technical, managerial and financial assistance to make the necessary investments in indigenous renewable energy resources.

Inadequate transport and telecommunications facilities continue to make life difficult for small island States. Public and private monopolies perpetuate a sad situation in which telecommunications costs are high and international shipping and air services are infrequent and of poor quality. More investment in these sectors — obviously, from foreign sources — is required if these States are to participate and benefit from world trade and development.

Small island developing States may be remote, but they are not far enough away to be unaffected by the sweeping tide of globalization or the changed economic fortunes of other countries. The Asian financial crisis, for example, has caused a significant drop in the number of tourists visiting the Pacific islands. Like all other developing countries, they, too, need to build the capacity to overcome the challenges of our interdependent world.

Small island developing States are responsible members of the community of nations. They acknowledge that their sustainable development is principally their own responsibility. Battling the vagaries of nature that are unique to them is not their gravest adversity; it is a challenge they accept. It would be truly tragic if we were to withhold the special attention and support that they deserve.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): The Danish Government associates itself with the statement made by Finland on behalf of the European Union.

We welcome this important review of the Barbados Programme of Action. It is a welcome opportunity for the international community to discuss the concerns of small island developing States. The international community has an obligation to assist in meeting the specific needs of small island developing States. These needs were acknowledged in Agenda 21 and further articulated in the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the Global Conference on Small Island Developing States in 1994.

Denmark recognizes the special vulnerability of small island developing States. Such vulnerability is the consequence of, among other things, their small, open economies, their fragile ecosystems and the negative environmental impact of human activities on these ecosystems, as well as their susceptibility to natural disasters and climate change. There is broad political interest in these issues in Denmark. Only two weeks ago a major international non-governmental organization conference was held on the isle of Aerø. The topic was renewable energy and small islands.

Denmark welcomes the renewed efforts by small island developing States and by the international community to implement the commitments under the Barbados Programme of Action. In our view, three issues are important in relation to the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action: first, the continued deterioration of the marine environment and its long-term effects on marine biodiversity and human health; secondly, the difficult issues regarding freshwater and land degradation on small island developing States; and thirdly, the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, which erode the very basis of agricultural production.

Efforts to foster an enabling environment to assist small island developing States in addressing these issues so as to achieve sustainable development should be given priority. However, the most important questions are how to improve the situations of women and the poorest target groups in particular and how to assist the least developed small island developing States.

To follow up on the Barbados Programme of Action, Denmark is actively supporting activities carried out by multilateral environment and development programmes in partnership with small island developing States. In our dialogue with the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP), we attach great importance to their cooperation with small island developing States, in particular with a view to improving the situation for women and the poorest target groups.

The Lomé Convention is the centrepiece of cooperation between the European Union and small island developing States. For the period from 1996 to 2000, the European Union is committing over 1 billion euros in development assistance to Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. High priority is given to supporting women and the poorest target groups. The European Union is by far the most significant development partner for small island developing States.

In addition, Denmark is working together with small island developing States in a number of ways that support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. Let me mention our institutional support, in the fields of climate change and sustainable energy, to the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and the University of the South Pacific.

In our cooperation with the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, we are supporting the regional coordination in the field of climate change and thus strengthening the negotiating capacity of small island developing States. Through the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission and the University of the South Pacific, we are supporting the development of efficient planning tools for energy-sector planning in small island States with a view to increasing the use of renewable energy. The project is implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme and the UNEP Collaboration Centre in Risø, Denmark. It is important to add that these activities have been initiated by the small island States themselves and that they are part of a regional cooperation effort that already exists and therefore does not necessitate new institutions.

We are supporting development work in Maldives through our mixed credits programme. We are supporting the delivery to and installation in Male power station of a new diesel generator. This will lead to an increased energy supply in Maldives and, at the same time, to the reduced utilization of an old, environmentally degraded power station. At Fuah Mulaku, a remote island in Maldives, we are supporting the construction of a harbour. The project is a key element in the national development plan to increase the economic sustainability of the island.

Those are a few examples of the kind of partnership we are engaged in. I would like to conclude by once again welcoming this opportunity to focus attention on the specific issues pertinent to small island developing States. This is an important opportunity for all of us to renew our commitment to the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and to adopt a new political declaration to that effect.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Franck Loy, Under-Secretary for Global Affairs of the United States of America.

Mr. Loy (United States of America): It is my pleasure to represent the United States at this important review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted five years ago in Barbados. It is also my pleasure to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga into the United Nations family.

The United States enjoys a long-standing and close relationship with small island States, in no small part because of our shared commitment to the principles of sustainable development. We too are, in part, an island State, with small islands represented in our delegation. Island States have expressed a strong desire to take charge of their economic future and to plug in, if you will, to the new global economy. The Barbados Programme of Action is a truly global effort to pursue sustainable development. We want to make that vision a reality.

We are well aware that globalization strikes fear in the hearts of many. Yet small island States have much to gain from it, just as the United States and many parts of Europe, Asia and Latin America already have gained from it. Clearly, though, some developing nations have gained more than others. Some common characteristics that we think are shared by those that have benefited the most from globalization include good governance, strong and active participation in international deliberations, adequate levels of investment and a clean, well-protected environment.

One of the things we have come to feel strongly about is that economic growth, social development and environmental protection are not discrete goals. They are intertwined, and they must be pursued as a whole, or none will be achieved fully.

As we begin to examine the progress we have made in realizing the Barbados commitments and what actions we should take in the future, I would like to focus on the United States approach to three issues that are relevant to the sustainable development of island States. I shall first talk about climate change. Island States are not just vulnerable to the effects of climate change; for many of them it is the transcendent — the life-or-death — issue. Some have already begun to see some impacts; we have had reports that rising sea levels have begun to cause salt-water encroachment into drinking water supplies.

It is a fact that small island States have the most to lose from climate change and that they are among the least able to do anything to stop it. They more than any other States need an international agreement that sets up an effective system under which all nations of the world are encouraged to take actions designed to arrest climate change. Many island nations have already taken initiatives to reduce their own emissions, and we commend them for their leadership.

We too are working aggressively to make our society more energy-efficient. The Clinton Administration secured $1 billion this year for an array of domestic climate-related technologies and proposes to invest $1.37 billion in those technologies next year. I can say with utter conviction that the President of the United States is totally and fully committed to finding ways, both domestic and international, to reduce the threat of climate change.

I turn next to fisheries. Coastal and high-seas fisheries are vitally important resources for island nations. It is imperative that all fishing nations use those resources sustainably. We think that the most important step countries can take towards that end is to ratify or accede to the United Nations Agreement for the International Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Agreement to Promote Compliance with Conservation and Management Measures by Fishing Vessels on the High Seas. Those treaties together form a vital framework to promote the achievement of sustainable marine fisheries.

Happily, many small island developing States have signed the fish stocks Agreement. In fact, of the 24 States that have ratified it, 13 are small island developing States. We congratulate them. Further, we call upon countries that have not ratified or acceded to the FAO compliance Agreement to do so soon.

Now a word on coral reefs. One of the great ecological tragedies of recent years is the continuing deterioration of coral reefs around the world. These ecosystems are critical to island nations: they generate tourism, they provide productive fisheries, and they act as buffers against storm damage and coastal erosion. Earlier this year we released a report on the fate of coral reefs, which points out that in 1998 coral reefs around the world suffered the most extensive and severe bleaching and mortality in the modern record. Our report concluded that a rise in sea surface temperatures induced by global warming appeared to be a significant factor. In Barbados, the United States Government proposed the establishment of the International Coral Reefs Initiative. Since then, I am happy to note, it has become an important forum for addressing the question of threats to coral reefs.

Those are but three of the many pressing issues that bear upon the progress of island nations towards sustainable development. We have to work together to address them. We need to find ways to attract the interest and the resources of the private sector. The islands must, with the help of the international community, build their own capacity to face these challenges. We look forward to our continued friendship and to our continued cooperation on these important issues.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Valentino Martelli, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Italy.

Mr. Martelli (Italy): Let me begin by welcoming the three new States Members of the United Nations: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mrs. Hassi, Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, took the floor yesterday on behalf of the European Union. Italy fully supports her statement.

From the beginning, Italy has strongly supported the Alliance of Small Island States. We have enormous experience in problems related to the environment. Our vast coastal area and small islands are characterized by fragile ecosystems. For example, Venice, one of the world's most beautiful cities, is permanently threatened by high seas. Italy's friendship with the small island States has grown because we share so many features and problems. We are ready to put all of our expertise at their disposal. We will continue to be a strong advocate

for the needs of small island States in all forums, including the European Union and the United Nations. Together we have fought and won many battles for democracy and mutual respect, for transparency and participation, against closed doors and exclusion.

Over the past two decades, international public opinion has expressed growing concern over the deterioration of our planet. Small island developing States are one focus of this concern. People in my own and other countries are demanding concerted international action on a global scale. They want effective measures that will give a better life and a better world to future generations. The international community must do everything possible to prevent the recurrence of tragedies like those involving the *Exxon Valdez* and the *Amoco Cadiz*.

Italy has repeatedly voiced its concern over the immense damage that humankind is inflicting on our planet. We recklessly endanger human lives, important lands and beautiful towns, seas and landscapes. As Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote, everything is perfect in the hands of the Creator; everything degenerates in the hands of man. Like climate change, sea-level rise, land degradation and drought, natural disasters also endanger our lives and the lives of small island developing States. These threats also increase the ranks of the poor. But poverty can and must be eradicated. Italy stands ready to do its part.

The Barbados Programme of Action, which promised so much, has not led to a substantial increase in aid resources to small island developing States. Nor has it been sufficiently implemented. More resources and better coordination are needed. Donor and recipient countries must pledge to pursue the same goals. Let us make the most of this special session in order to do this.

Italy has long stressed the vulnerability of small island developing States to climate change and sea level rise. We are aware of our responsibilities towards small island developing States in their quest for sustainable development. Whenever natural disaster has struck, Italy has been on the front line with emergency relief and rehabilitation assistance. Last year, we started a programme aimed at fostering the access of small island developing States to advanced techniques of climate change simulation. We strongly supported the workshop on clean development mechanisms in the Marshall Islands last July. We held a training course on energy planning for small islands to improve capacity-building in the environmentally sound use of energy, the exploitation of renewables and the pursuit of sustainable development.

I am glad to inform the Assembly that Italy is contributing half a million dollars a year to a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization project for the preservation of the cultural heritage of small island developing States.

Finally, I am pleased to announce here that the Italian Government has just approved financial contributions to two programmes aimed at the sustainable development of small island developing States: one is phase two of the project for the global network of the Barbados Programme of Action, the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET); the second is a United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs programme to build capacity in public administration and civil service and foster regional cooperation in the Caribbean small island developing States.

The dawn of the new millennium represents a unique opportunity for us to implement long-overdue changes in the types of action we undertake. The process as a whole must be streamlined. We need to tackle simpler projects and ensure that assistance is delivered more quickly and efficiently. Our contributions should not go to feeding bloated bureaucracies and overstaffed organizations. To have a more direct and substantial impact, our focus should be on small centres and local communities.

Let us move from empty words to hard facts. The time for action is now. The place is here. We need to agree on a realistic and effective review and appraisal of the Barbados Programme of Action. We need to give small island developing States all the support that they rightly deserve.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Clement Leo, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu.

Mr. Leo (Vanuatu): I am delighted to have this opportunity to make a brief statement on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu.

Five years after the first Conference for small island developing States, which was held in Barbados in 1994, we are gathered together here again to review progress and achievements in our efforts to achieve sustainable

development. We have jointly confirmed our common will, expressed in the commitments made in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 and at the small island developing States Conference in Barbados in 1994, to ensure the promotion of peace, development and the protection of the environment.

The need to pay special attention to the environmental and economic problems hindering the sustainable development of small islands was explicitly recognized by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit. Chapter 17 of Agenda 21, the programme of action for sustainable development, adopted at Rio, identifies this as one of the programme areas where new approaches for management and development at the national, subregional, regional and international levels are required.

We recognized that the difficulties of small island developing States cannot effectively be solved by individual island States without active international cooperation and assistance. The recommendation of the Earth Summit to convene a conference to consider the specific problems of small island developing States was seen as appropriate for designing a comprehensive programme for the solution of the problems of small island States.

We also recognized that the focus of the Barbados Programme of Action is on promoting sustainable development, with the recognition that frequently stressful environmental conditions and relatively narrow resource bases are among the main factors limiting the development options of small island developing States and jeopardizing our rich and diverse cultural heritage. As small island developing States, our continuing development critically depends on the full exploitation of our marine and terrestrial resources.

The Republic of Vanuatu shares the same environmental problems as other small island developing States. Our small size, isolation, relative paucity of resources and geographical locations, where natural disasters are common, affect our development and the natural resources that support that development. Our island country is generally vulnerable and is exposed to periodic hostile environmental conditions and events such as cyclones, landslides and volcanic eruptions. The relatively uniform climate and soil conditions usually limit the agricultural production of our country to a few crops and make us depend heavily on importing other products.

The environmental aspects of the issues under review are numerous. Despite the difficulties that we are faced with, the Republic of Vanuatu has given very special attention to certain areas in implementation of the Programme of Action to promote efficient protection of resources in the following specific areas.

As regards climate change and sea level rise, using the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Project (PICCAP), we have established a national climate change committee, known as the National Advisory Committee on Climate Change (NACCC), to provide technical advice and implement the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Committee draws on expertise within key Government departments. Initial PICCAP initiatives focused on enhancing the understanding of climate change issues and future scenarios. We have now completed our National Communication for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be presented at the Conference next month in Bonn.

As regards management of waste, we have received assistance from the European Community and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme to develop our waste management characterizations and minimization policies and strategies. This assistance will help us to develop our national waste management strategies for the urban and the rural areas and to put in place a legal framework for sustainable waste characterization and minimization.

As regards coastal and marine resources, support is being provided by regional and bilateral agencies to promote the protection, restoration and sustainable use of our coral reefs and associated ecosystems. In 1997, we participated in the International Year of the Reef and the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), campaigns which resulted in the development and promotion, at all levels of the community, of the conservation and protection of coral reefs, which in their own right are the protectors of our fragile marine ecosystems, on which we are very much dependent for food and as a source of our economic development.

As regards freshwater resources, this problem was approached through a national survey of the country's biological diversity. Technical assistance was provided to aid the survey of the freshwater of Vanuatu. The results of this survey have indicated that Vanuatu has many more new species of freshwater wildlife than was known.

Using the information from this survey, a freshwater management policy will be developed to take account of the diverse freshwater ecosystem of Vanuatu.

In the area of biodiversity, within the overall framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme, through its technical advisory services, is assisting the Republic of Vanuatu with Global Environment Facility funds so that we can formulate and implement our national biodiversity strategy and action plan. At the same time, we recognize the South Pacific Biodiversity Conservation Programme, which has enabled Vanuatu to establish areas of significant natural heritage that are protected and managed by the resource stakeholders. We appreciate very much the assistance that has been provided and are looking forward to receiving continued assistance to enable us to develop other areas of similar significance.

As for legislative mechanisms, with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank, the Republic of Vanuatu has prepared environmental and resource management legislation that takes account of environmental issues of concern to Vanuatu. We have also reviewed our sectoral legal mechanisms in line with the principles of sustainable development. This review includes the development of a forest policy.

In 1994, Vanuatu acceded to the Montreal Protocol and the Vienna Convention, and we have also recently signed the United Nations Convention on combating desertification and drought. We recognize that these are areas of real concern to our island country, and we are making every effort — bilaterally and through the Convention secretariat — to fulfil our responsibilities as provided for in the Convention. This is an area in which we require technical and financial inputs from the organizations involved in order to shoulder those responsibilities.

As regards institutions and administrative capacity, recognizing that the capacities needed to implement the Programme of Action are inadequate, we have made efforts with our bilateral partners to give training courses to our technical officers so that they can provide skills training in technical areas such as climate change and waste characterization and minimization. These are areas which at present we do not have the technical and financial capacity to deal with ourselves. At the same time, we also appreciate the Government's efforts under the comprehensive reform programme. Under this programme, the Government, with its commitment to good governance and transparency, has made hard and painful decisions to reduce its workforce so that it can be economically sustainable.

While in Vanuatu progress has been made, although slowly, since the 1994 adoption of the Programme of Action, a number of obstacles must be overcome for the Programme to be efficiently implemented. The actions we have identified are improving the mechanism for the implementation of the priority programmes and goals, consistent with those of the United Nations system; improving the alignment of United Nations system activities with those of regional organizations and Governments; developing improved performance indicators for measuring, in collaboration with other countries and regional organizations, the effectiveness of the implementation of international agreements and decisions of agencies of the United Nations system; and ensuring comprehensive participation by States and relevant stakeholders in the development of regional initiatives and agreements.

In conclusion, we note with interest that the small island developing States donor meeting, which was held in February this year, was a step forward that could be further pursued in order to address the bilateral, regional, subregional and international issues. We should pursue further efforts by the small island developing States and the donors to implement the decisions that have been made. While Vanuatu did not participate in that meeting, our priority areas highlighted above reflect the needs for which further technical and financial assistance is required. We need the support of donors in our efforts to address these needs.

As we come to the end of this century, we would like to see the collaborative sustainable development efforts that small island developing States and donor countries have already begun continue into the next millennium. These efforts should be strengthened and carried out practically by all parties.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Castaneda-Cornejo, Chairman of the delegation of El Salvador.

Mr. Castaneda-Cornejo (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to congratulate and welcome the new Member States of our Organization: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga.

By the adoption in Barbados in 1994 of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the international community put to the test the global alliance for sustainable development that was agreed at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janiero in 1992. At both of these Conferences the island States and the international community were urged to tackle problems comprehensively and to recognize that small islands possess characteristics that make them particularly vulnerable and, therefore, deserving of international cooperation so that they could meet the growing challenges of globalization and economic interdependence.

Now, five years later, we can recognize that some positive changes have occurred in the environmental field, although much remains to be done in order to resolve the enormous, complex problems of the subregion. These past years have provided us with experiences that are worth exploring in depth. Among them we should highlight efforts on the part of the Caribbean countries to carry out joint plans to adapt to climatic change; a regional project to monitor the rise in sea level in 11 countries of the Pacific; the design and implementation of joint measures to promote sustainable tourism; the adoption of a strategy related to the International Coral Reef Initiative; and the establishment of new policies regarding fishing and the negotiation of regional fishing agreements.

Recognizing the importance of these efforts, we believe it necessary to draw attention to the fact that bilateral and multilateral assistance to small islands has been tending to diminish since 1994, when major economic activity was generated as a result of the Barbados Conference. As a result of this declining trend, many of the vulnerable island economies continue to feel the impact of global financial difficulties and the pressure to focus on short-term growth to the detriment of long-term sustainability.

Like the small island States, the Central American countries, and El Salvador in particular, are vulnerable to natural and environmental disasters, especially to storms, to the effects of El Niño and La Niña and to other natural disasters, such as hurricanes George and Mitch, which caused tremendous damage to the productive infrastructure of the region and great loss of human life. Therefore, we believe it is of enormous importance to redouble the efforts of the international community to deal, as a matter of priority, with the relevant projects and initiatives that are being discussed in various financial forums and forums of international cooperation.

Another of the important challenges confronting small island States is related to the fact that, because of their size and population density, small island developing States experience enormous difficulties in managing waste. The water treatment facilities are inadequate, and this contributes to waste water being dumped in the sea, creating a vicious circle that has a negative impact on these States' two major industries — tourism and fishing. These industries also demand particularly careful management so as to avoid the deterioration or exhaustion of the resources on which they depend.

The deterioration of this problem further aggravates the freshwater situation, because many small island States suffer from a severe shortage of freshwater and have few remedial options. There is a limited amount of surface water and groundwater, particularly on volcanic islands and atolls, which, together with growing urbanization, increases demand and contaminates supplies.

This disheartening scenario also falls within the context of globalization and trade liberalization, which threaten profoundly to alter the economies of many small island States and to impede their efforts to promote sustainable development. Recent events in the process of trade liberalization indicate that special trade preferences, which permit small island States to export their traditional agricultural produce to the developed countries at protected prices, will soon come to an end. Without these preferences, the small island States have scant hope that their produce will be able to compete in world agricultural markets with the large-scale exports of other countries. We must therefore consider the Barbados Programme of Action and address with due diligence the issues of trade and sustainable at this special session.

In conclusion, the Government of El Salvador, as a full member of the Association of Caribbean States, reiterates its support for the draft resolution recognizing the Caribbean as a special area in the context of sustainable development. We consider it to be fundamental in the search for multilateral solutions to the problems that will confront small island developing States, particularly in the Caribbean, in the building of sustainable societies in the new millennium.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Norman Pino, Chairman of the delegation of Venezuela.

Mr. Pino (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to express its pleasure at the convening

of this special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

At the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, the international community reiterated its recognition of the fact that small island developing States are encountering genuine obstacles in achieving sustainable development and need everyone's support. At its seventh session, the Commission on Sustainable Development also came to the conclusion that the full, effective and long-term implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action required the international community's steadfast and determined cooperation.

However, in spite of the achievements that have been made since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States five years ago, the international community has not acquired the effective financing mechanisms that would make sufficient, new and additional financial resources available to small island developing States, in accordance with the provisions of Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action. Indeed, we note with concern the yearly decline in official development assistance at a time when the developing countries are being called upon ever more urgently to participate in international trade on a footing of equality.

That is why we believe it is important to facilitate the integration of small island States into the world economy by strengthening their capacities, promoting the transfer of technology and encouraging private investment in order to help them meet the challenge posed by the globalization of markets.

Venezuela, with a coastline of 3,500 kilometres and more than 70 islands and islets in the Caribbean, attaches particular importance to that region. Our commitment to the small island States of the Caribbean has been unswerving and is reflected in various collaborative and cooperative projects in the fields of energy, finance, environment, technology, trade and culture, both bilateral and in the framework of the Group of Four, together with Mexico and Colombia.

In spite of the difficulties affecting the Venezuelan economy in the years following the adoption of the Declaration of Barbados and the Programme of Action, the Government of Venezuela has striven tirelessly to make a special contribution in solidarity with the island States of the Caribbean. In this context, we have launched our Cooperation Programme for the Caribbean, aimed specifically at addressing the needs of the area on a bilateral basis. This Programme has been active in various sectors, such as emergency assistance in natural disasters, infrastructure development and the construction of housing.

Similarly, through the Energy Cooperation Agreement for Central America and the Caribbean, better known as the San José Agreement, we have pursued with Mexico our development assistance work in the Caribbean subregion, recognizing its particular needs. Haiti, Barbados and Jamaica currently participate in this programme, which offers preferential financing conditions for projects chosen by the beneficiary country in accordance with its national priorities. On 3 August, this programme was renewed on similar terms for an additional year, marking nearly twenty-five years of Venezuelan involvement in this work.

That is why we join the appeal of the small island developing States to this Assembly to undertake a broader and more consistent effort of development cooperation. Now that their particular vulnerabilities are internationally recognized and our work is guided by a consistent platform for action, it is time for the international community to unite its efforts.

In this context, it is worth noting that Venezuela, which also recognizes the special needs of the economies of the area because of their small size and insular nature, has undertaken to open its trade on a non-reciprocal basis that lays the bases for a long-term integration effort. Similarly, we have systematically promoted a joint solution sensitive to the special characteristics of the local economies with respect to banana exports, aware that globalization and the rules of free trade should not hinder the processes of development.

Venezuela is a founding member of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), in the context of which we have cooperated in particular in the fields of tourism, trade and transport, which are deemed to be priority areas for the development of the region. Venezuela is also an observer member of the Caribbean Community, with which we also have a trade and investment agreement.

Venezuela considers that the design and implementation of sound regional development strategies in the Caribbean will allow them to exploit more effectively their human, natural, financial and institutional

resources and the opportunities to be opened up by the process of globalization. That is why we support the recognition of the Caribbean as a special area in the context of sustainable development, taking into account the peculiar and specific characteristics of the Caribbean Sea and promoting the husbandry, management and sustainable development of its resources for the social and economic well-being of the inhabitants of the region.

We also support the initiative to establish the Caribbean sustainable tourism zone, which is being promoted by the Association of Caribbean States. The ACS Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in April in the Dominican Republic, produced a commitment to forge greater political and commercial unity among members in the twenty-first century. Venezuela will lend its wholehearted support to this process and is compelled by conviction and force of circumstances to make the Caribbean region one of the main focal points of its foreign policy.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the implementation of the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to the His Excellency Mr. Hans Linton, Chairman of the delegation of Sweden.

Mr. Linton (Sweden): Sweden welcomes this opportunity to participate in the review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, held in the context of continued international efforts to promote sustainable development. Yesterday we heard the intervention of the Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation of Finland, talking on behalf of the European Union, a speech which Sweden, of course, fully supports.

For small island developing States, the necessity to mainstream environmental concerns in all areas into the overall political agenda is clearly visible, and the concept of sustainable development presents a concrete and practical challenge. We have learned during this process that the impact of environmental degradation on small island developing States is very real and often carries immediate socio-economic effects. I am well aware of these facts, being accredited to 10 Caribbean countries.

In this context, the Rio principle of common but differentiated responsibility of States deserves to be highlighted again because development is not a static condition, but rather a process which involves changing roles and evolving relations within the international community.

Therefore, Sweden welcomes the determination demonstrated by small island developing States participating in this special session to mobilize resources, to facilitate participation and partnerships and to promote sustainability in their development efforts.

Sweden has a strong commitment to continued international development cooperation, and we are among those four countries that meet the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. To us, therefore, the steady decline in the global volume of development assistance is alarming, particularly in the context of worsening living conditions for the poorest people in the least developed countries, some of whom live in small island developing States.

Swedish development cooperation is aimed at achieving a higher standard of living and fairer conditions for poor people, to ensure that their fundamental needs are met and that they are involved in political decisions which determine the way society develops. One of the specific objectives is to promote the far-sighted management of natural resources and consideration for the environment. Therefore, environmental sustainability is an integral part of all Swedish development cooperation.

Sweden also contributes to the work of the Global Environment Facility, as one of its donors and as a member of the board of directors. The Global Environment Facility currently co-funds projects in more than 25 small island developing States, primarily focused on conserving and restoring biodiversity and on issues related to climate change, including its root causes. For example, in the Republic of Cape Verde, the energy and water sector reform and development project is promoting renewable energy technologies such as wind and solar energy, intended to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels. In this project, co-funded by the Global Environment Facility, the private sector is involved in building local capacity for supplying, maintaining and installing wind-power generation systems.

As underlined by the representative of the European Union in her statement yesterday, partnerships such as this, with the private sector as well as with non-governmental organizations, can provide unexplored

possibilities in efforts towards sustainable development. Sweden will continue to promote such partnerships, in the various multilateral institutions through which our development assistance is channelled, for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

My country looks forward to continued international cooperation and improved coordination in supporting the political commitment expressed at this special session of the General Assembly.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Volkan Vural, Chairman of the delegation of Turkey.

Mr. Vural (Turkey): Five years have elapsed since the Barbados Conference. It is now clear that our initial predictions concerning sustainable development in small island developing States have proved to be correct. These States represent some of the most vulnerable areas of the globe. They face more than their fair share of natural and environmental threats, but with less breathing space. These huge problems are clearly beyond the capability of such vulnerable countries to be tackled alone. It is true that globalization and trade liberalization present unprecedented opportunities for most countries. Nevertheless, the small economies of small island developing States are liable to face difficulties in realigning their economic structures before suffering a sharp downturn. Many fear that globalization might be a tidal wave, albeit in a different form.

Small island developing States have certainly made significant progress towards meeting the priorities and objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action. They have carried out far-reaching economic and social reforms. These reforms have affected and influenced changes in the relationships between people and their management of the natural resources around them.

Following the momentum generated at the Rio Summit, we are happy to note that small island developing States assumed a new way of thinking in addressing the concept of development. Today Governments, business, non-governmental organizations and other major groups, as well as citizens themselves, and especially women, are all taking part in this process. It is quite heartening to note that many small island developing States score highly on the United Nations Development Programme human development index. We feel that this testifies to the sound policies that such countries follow. It is essential that their efforts should be supplemented with international assistance. It is equally important that the small island developing States complete their national sustainable development strategies. We feel that appropriate regional strategies would be useful. Such strategies should identify priorities on both regional and subregional bases.

Experience could be drawn from existing programmes, such as the Global Environment Facility. In this context, the involvement of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with small island developing States through its stewardship of the environmental conventions, UNEP's regional seas programme and the global Programme of Action provide a valuable basis for enhanced cooperation with small island developing States.

Tourism in the twenty-first century will be the planet's biggest industry. Along with its phenomenal growth and size, the tourism industry will also have to take on more responsibility for its extensive impacts. It is generally recognized that the small island developing States are more vulnerable to the impact of tourism than other destinations. More economic and technical support is therefore needed to ensure that the development of tourism in these States is sustainable. The income generated by tourism should also be distributed fairly in the communities. Natural, environmental and cultural heritage are among the foundations of a prosperous tourism industry. Priority should be given to the protection and preservation of these assets.

Turkey supports action aimed at securing improvement in early warning systems and in the capacity of the small island developing States to respond to climate change and natural disasters. New waste management facilities will have to be put in place as soon as possible to avoid further degradation of coastal and marine resources. Improving the assessment, planning and integrated management of freshwater resources and land is urgently required. Resources will have to be mobilized for the generation of renewable energy. We must assist the current development efforts of small island developing States in more sustainable directions.

Turkey has over 5,000 miles of coastline. It derives a significant portion of its income from tourism. It is susceptible to similar environmental, economic and social pressures. It faces natural calamities of its own. We are therefore most sympathetic to the needs of the small island developing States.

Turkey stands ready to contribute its fair share in the provision of adequate, predictable, new and additional

financial resources. We are aware that time is of the essence.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Amraiya Naidu, Chairman of the delegation of Fiji.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): It is an honour and a privilege to address this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly to review the progress of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We endorse the statements of the Group of 77 and the Alliance of Small Island States made on behalf of small island developing States.

The daunting challenges faced by small island developing States in our quest for sustainable development are real and well known not only among the small island developing States but also among all members of the international community; this resulted in the Barbados Declaration five years ago. We are now taking stock of the commitments that we all agreed upon, but, regrettably, very little progress has been made on the implementation of the Programme of Action. It has received little support from the international community. In our view, the developed countries should not and must not continue to be spectators, having initially agreed on the Programme of Action.

My delegation notes with concern that adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources in support of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action have not been provided by the international community. We are mindful that the overall continuing decline in official development assistance will impede the effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, and we urge the developed nations to honour the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as official development assistance to help small island nations meaningfully in their pursuit of sustainable development.

Fiji is facing a number of challenges in the short and medium term in its efforts to achieve sustainable economic and social development. The challenges include the following: increasing the level of private investment and creating employment opportunities for thousands of school leavers annually entering the job market; increased competition of commodity prices in international markets; reducing the national debt; adjusting to the realities of a loss of trade preferences — preferences which have created significant economic and social development; and mainstreaming disadvantaged groups in the development process. To respond to such challenges, Parliament has approved a new strategic plan for Fiji for 1999-2001. The plan highlights the strategies to achieve sustainable economic and social progress in the twenty-first century and points to positive indicators for sustainable economic recovery.

Sectoral policies have been realigned towards sustained natural resource utilization, development of human resource-based industries, provision of infrastructure and other essential utilities, and additional impetus on social services, such as education, health and housing. Other initiatives include poverty alleviation, mainstreaming of women in development, rural and urban development and disaster management.

We find it very difficult to effectively implement all plans for sustainable development when forces of globalization have an adverse impact on our economy because of market access, erosion of special trade preferences and lack of national capacity to operationalize the sustainable development goals of my Government. For small island developing States, special trade preferences mean the survival of our economy, which, according to the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), is a violation of free trade. Let me say here that the solution to the sustainable development of small islands and, indeed, the solution for the developing and the developed world alike, is not free trade alone, but also the ability of our global trading system to develop rules and mechanisms for countries to fairly share the benefits of global trade. My delegation therefore calls on the United Nations system and the international community for an equitable rule-based international trading system. In spite of all our efforts, the terms of trade are not always in our favour, which could be further compounded by the coming into force of the rules of the WTO.

The uniqueness of the small island developing States cannot be overemphasized in terms of our smallness, remoteness and proneness to the destructive forces of nature, including hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones, earthquakes, sea level rise and other climatic changes. The effects of natural disasters increase the Government's expenditure through rehabilitation programmes, costing millions of dollars which could otherwise have been better utilized in a variety of ways to address natural resource conservation and environmental concerns for sustainable development objectives.

We support the call made for restrictions on the transboundary movement of toxic and hazardous cargo across our waters, in accordance with the Basel Convention and the Barbados Programme of Action.

The restructuring of our economy to cope with globalization is not simple. We appreciate that the participation of the private sector and civil society is essential. Unfortunately, we do not have the capacity to attract the desired level of foreign investment, as do other, larger, developing countries. For the sustainable development of small island developing States, one avenue to widen our resource base is the exploitation of ocean resources.

In this connection, my delegation calls on the international community to support our efforts in oceanic scientific research and database development; increasing access fees for our fisheries resources; the promotion, assessment and monitoring of commercial investments in catching, processing and marketing to increase ownership and management of commercial fisheries activities by our people; policing and protection of our ocean resources; and research and transfer of technology to assess the effects of the exploration and exploitation of non-living resources on coastal and marine environment, to name just a few.

Fiji has endeavoured all along to fulfil many of its obligations in the last five years, within its capacity, as required under the Programme of Action. The only way forward now for us is for the developed partners to make a firm commitment with renewed vigour and a sense of purpose for the full implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

We therefore urge the United Nations and the donor countries to assist small island developing States in achieving their sustainable development goals.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hubert Wurth, Chairman of the delegation of Luxembourg.

Mr. Wurth (Luxembourg) *(interpretation from French)*: Luxembourg welcomes the convening of this special session. Yesterday the Assembly heard the statement by the representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, which expressed a commitment that we naturally share regarding the matters now before us.

Five years have passed since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, and this is the time for reviewing what has been done and for providing new momentum.

Luxembourg, as a small country, understands the situation of small island developing States and the very acute sense of vulnerability felt by populations that are surrounded by water and that have few resources.

Of course, my country is landlocked and has no coast. Nevertheless, a small entity essentially lives a life of its own whether it be landlocked or surrounded by water. It has to define its relationship with its environment, break out of its isolation and avoid being submerged or simply forgotten. This is really an exhausting undertaking and yet, in addition, the country must also develop. Being located on an important international shipping route can help economic development, but it can, at the same time, make things more difficult because of the management responsibilities and the dangers inherent in such a situation.

Small island developing States must be very careful in defining and implementing their choices, for they cannot afford to make mistakes. The challenges they face certainly offer opportunities as well, especially in the area of tourism, but limited resources and geographical constraints mean that they are intrinsically fragile and will probably remain so. It is therefore perfectly justifiable to highlight, in the case of insular States, the difficulties and questions they face given the dangerous natural phenomena and the harmful economic developments that can occur so that we can better understand them and devise new forms of cooperation. Such States have very specific fears, and these fears often have a global dimension.

What we do here will have a particular impact since our discussions have involved a very large number of delegations, even though many of them have very different concerns.

Awareness and consideration of other people's problems and unfamiliar situations are the main assets of our Organization.

We must fight ignorance and indifference. A good understanding is essential to give effect to actual, real solidarity. From this standpoint, it is crucially important to establish the vulnerability index advocated by the small island developing States.

Luxembourg plans to be part of this solidarity. We are committed to the undertaking made at Kyoto on the greenhouse effect. At the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Lydie Polfer, stressed our Government's decision to increase our official development assistance. In the year 2000 Luxembourg will reach the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, and in a few years this could rise to 1 per cent.

Of course, a small country cannot spread its limited resources too thin, so we have decided to limit to 10 the number of countries with which we will have bilateral programmes. Of these, the Republic of Cape Verde, a small island developing State, is the first of our target countries. Now is certainly not the time to go into the details of our bilateral cooperation, which arose out of the fact that there are many Cape Verdean citizens in Luxembourg. I simply wanted to draw attention to this contact between two small countries situated so far from each other on different continents — a contact characterized by warm and promising human relations.

All Members of the Organization must explore ways in which they can contribute to the realization of the common objectives we are discussing. In describing our approach, the delegation of Luxembourg has sought to demonstrate its attachment and commitment to ensuring the success of the objectives outlined in Rio and Barbados.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Samhan, Chairman of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Samhan (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the United Arab Emirates, I have the honour to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session and its special session.

I should also like to express our gratitude for this opportunity to participate in the special session devoted to the review and assessment of the Barbados Programme of Action on small island developing States.

We fully agree with the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China as well as with other statements and proposals aimed at finding ways to succeed in the implementation of the Programme of Action that was adopted at Barbados in 1994. We believe that the holding of this special session offers a unique occasion to the international community to examine the urgent economic, development and environmental needs of the small island developing States.

Furthermore, we can determine the qualitative obstacles and the essential challenges that stand in the way of national, regional and international efforts in order to help these States address their development, social and environmental problems. This can be done within the framework of the objectives that were agreed upon in Agenda 21 and the Programme of Action for sustainable development.

The world now recognizes that small island developing States and coastal States are in a special and unique situation. They represent the most vulnerable developing economies due to the smallness of their territory, their geographic isolation and the scarcity of their natural resources, such as fresh water and energy sources.

These States have to face constant natural catastrophes and pollution of their environment, as well as negative climatic changes, rising sea level, land erosion, population growth, poverty of their inhabitants and numerous pressures on the use of their natural resources. Although some States have tried to adopt measures in order to implement the Barbados Programme of Action, national efforts and action have not been sufficient and have achieved only limited results because of the States' modest financial and technical resources and their growing marginalization as a result of the growing economic gap between developing and developed States. This is particularly the case given the globalization and liberalization of trade and financial markets. This last factor has deprived these States of the ability to compete on an equal footing with other States and to take advantage of international economic developments.

We have given greater importance in our national development priorities to the development of our vast islands and coastal areas, to the protection of our natural reserves and to the tackling of the negative impact on our coastlines of environmental degradation, climatic changes and sea level rise.

We are concerned about the illegitimate practices of the Islamic Republic of Iran with regard to the three islands of the United Arab Emirates, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa, that Iran has occupied since 1971, particularly because Iran is carrying out military manoeuvres, stockpiling prohibited arms and building

illegal military and civilian installations. All of this has caused marine and land pollution on these islands and in our territorial waters and the waters of the Gulf. Given that the practices of Iran are in violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourliness, we call on Iran to end its occupation of these three islands and to respond to the peace initiative under way so that peace and stability can prevail in the region and the world.

In this respect, we would like to express our concern about the pollution of the environment resulting from the illegal use of commercial vessels that travel through our waterways in the Gulf. We ask for regional and international cooperation in order to preserve this area and its natural resources. This area is both a source of energy and a unique strategic space for international commercial and economic relations.

The United Arab Emirates has tried to strengthen cooperation with other island States with common interests and with which we have friendly bilateral relations. We exchange expertise, experiences and information with them and have extended financial, technical and humanitarian assistance in order to allow some of these States to face the natural catastrophes they have been hit by. We also have financial programmes to develop natural and human resources and to diversify the national sources of income of these countries, thereby allowing them to integrate into international trade and economic relations on an equal footing with other countries.

We believe that the small island developing States must formulate the national strategies necessary to face their existing social and development problems and to develop their natural, human, financial and cultural resources by reforming their national economic structures and systems. But we would like to stress the need for developed and donor countries and regional and international financial institutions to increase official and unofficial loans and assistance to these States. We also call for the cancellation of foreign debt and for helping these countries acquire environmentally sound technologies, information and expertise through preferential and soft loans. These can be used to deal with their economic and environmental problems and to provide social, educational and health services to their populations. This would enable these States to prepare an appropriate environment that can attract foreign investment and give their products access to world markets.

Finally, we hope to be able to reach a consensus regarding the initiatives necessary to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alyaksandr Sychov, Chairman of the delegation of Belarus.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The development of the world economy and international economic relations has become particularly dynamic in this last decade of the century. Liberalization of international trade, the refinement of economic structures at the micro level and the swift development of international financial markets and cross-border communications and information exchanges have all created the phenomenon we call globalization. While creating unprecedented opportunities and prospects for further advances by States in terms of economic growth and social progress, these processes have also increased the vulnerabilities of States — primarily of the less developed States — and have given rise to a number of social and economic problems.

In this connection, the Government of the Republic of Belarus regards as very timely the convening of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly to review and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This group of countries faces particular problems caused by natural disasters.

The reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action have noted a range of achievements made by the small island developing States. Some countries have moved ahead in the area of sustainable development. In other countries, social and economic progress has been thwarted by narrowly focused economies, underdeveloped national macroeconomic management institutions and a shortage of trained personnel. Given all their problems, there is a need to increase international assistance to these countries. The Republic of Belarus supports the efforts of the Governments of the small island developing States to implement the Barbados Programme of Action and to get onto the sustainable development track.

Our country has long-standing economic, scientific, technical and cultural ties with many of these countries. We are interested in further developing our ties and broadening cooperation for the benefit of countries and peoples, thereby also helping to implement the Barbados

Programme of Action. Belarus, in firmly and consistently implementing the principles of sustainable development, has acquired some experience in this area and would be willing to share it with small island developing States.

Our delegation is also pleased with the current prospects for international cooperation to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. The global conferences and summits convened under the auspices of the United Nations in the 1990s, the 1994 Barbados document and the implementation process at the national, regional and international levels have shown that the process of implementation has been fairly dynamic and that donor States have been fairly active. This inspires some hope for the implementation of the key goal of the Programme of Action.

The international community's efforts should focus on strengthening the national economic and scientific potential of small island developing States and on helping them to diversify and to achieve structural transformation of their economies. It is important to create favourable external conditions for resolving the most acute socio-economic problems, including poverty reduction, and also to implement national programmes to reduce the threat of natural disasters and to offset the consequences of global climate change.

One of the most important tasks is integrating the small island developing States in the world economy on an equitable basis, taking account of their particular geographical situations and of the specific socio-economic factors affecting them. All of these aspects of our cooperation should be reflected in the final document of this special session. We would hope that the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations Secretariat will devote continuing attention to the process of implementing the Barbados Programme of Action.

The problems facing the small island developing States should not get lost among the many other issues that the United Nations deals with. The Government of the Republic of Belarus will, for its part, continue to provide ongoing support to small island developing States as they endeavour to implement the Programme of Action.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bernd Niehaus, chairman of the delegation of Costa Rica.

Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation warmly welcomes the holding of this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly for the review and assessment of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of the small island developing States, adopted in Barbados in 1994.

Costa Rica recognizes and appreciates the contributions of small developing States to the international community. We are convinced that all countries, small and large, can and should contribute actively to the well-being of humankind. The greatness of nations should not be measured in terms of their size or wealth but in terms of their spiritual greatness and their contributions to the peace and happiness of their citizens.

Costa Rica, which is also a small developing country, has fraternal ties to small island States. Small States are custodians of important natural resources. We have great biodiversity — rich coral reefs, a variety of marine-bird colonies, an abundance of mangroves and wetlands, and colourful bays and inlets alive with flora and fauna that are unique in the world. The preservation of this wealth is the particular responsibility of the small States.

Nevertheless, the responsibility is not ours alone. The international community as a whole should cooperate with our efforts to protect the environment. In this respect, obligations are shared but differentiated. That is why we advocate the creation of an international system that will reward those that protect the environment and punish those that contaminate and destroy it — an international system in which the developed countries will share their resources with the developing countries, in order to allow us to fulfil fully our obligation to protect the environment for the benefit of all of humankind.

The development of the small developing States is not only possible but necessary. We recognize that each State has the primary responsibility for seeking its own development. However, certain structural obstacles and conditions make it difficult to achieve this just objective. In this respect, we advocate a fairer and more balanced economic and commercial order that will give all nations access to the benefits of the globalization process and provide small developing countries with more options for reaching equitable commercial agreements, thus ensuring their products greater access to the markets of developed countries.

We consider that in order to support the development of small States, we need to establish open systems of commerce that will allow trade and investment to serve as the impetus for economic growth.

The small developing States, whether they are islands or not, are profoundly vulnerable. We frequently suffer from nature's wrath in the form of hurricanes, earthquakes, the El Niño phenomenon and climate change. To give a recent example, we in Central America were victims this year of Hurricane Mitch, which resulted in great loss of life and material damage. The destruction caused by that hurricane has left deep scars in the economies of the Central American nations and undermined the living conditions of our people.

Small States are also very vulnerable to the fluctuations of the world economy, be it because of the contagion effect of foreign economic crises, an increase in the price of basic commodities such as oil, or a decline in the prices of our products. Small economies do not provoke economic crises, but we suffer their adverse effects.

Additionally, our dependence on one or several products makes us even more vulnerable and, unfortunately, we have not received the necessary support to face these challenges. We believe that we need to establish international financial mechanisms that will provide a rapid, flexible and adequate response to the different types of crises faced by small States. In particular, as was pointed out by the President of Costa Rica, Mr. Miguel Angel Rodríguez, in the statement he delivered during this fifty-fourth session, my country is in favour of the creation of a contingency fund that will serve to respond effectively to the financial emergencies of the smaller and more vulnerable States.

Likewise, Costa Rica supports firmly the creation of a vulnerability index that will objectively measure our fragility and allow us to devise better strategies for responding to future crises.

Finally, Costa Rica has the honour of co-sponsoring the draft resolution recognizing the Caribbean Sea as a special development zone given the unique geographic, ecological, economic and social conditions of the Caribbean Basin.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, chairman of the delegation of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, allow me, on behalf of my Government, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of this special session of the General Assembly for the review and implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States. We are certain that under your able guidance, our proceedings will reach a successful conclusion.

Five years after the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, we are concerned to see that economic and social problems and global environmental deterioration, far from being resolved, are instead becoming increasingly acute. Confronted with the current complex world situation, the efforts of the small island developing States to become integrated into the new international relations are being increasingly limited. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing among and even within countries, and marginalization, poverty and unemployment are also increasing. The international order is unjust and unsustainable, and the neo-liberal globalization imposed on us can lead only to an economic disaster with repercussions that will be particularly serious for small island developing States.

How can we talk about taking action to preserve or improve the environment in countries where poverty forces citizens to struggle for their everyday survival? In the environmental sphere, this process is leading to the relentless and almost always irreversible destruction of nature, to the accelerated wasting and depletion of important non-renewable resources and to the deterioration of the land, air, groundwater resources, rivers and seas as a result of an absurd, chaotic and totally unsustainable model of consumption.

The particular circumstances of our economic and environmental vulnerability have imposed on our countries new challenges relating to our marginalization and isolation as well as to the erosion of trade preferences and the loss of markets for our exports. The international community must urgently adopt measures that will allow our countries to become integrated sustainably into the world economy.

My Government is aware that in order to safeguard life on our planet we must live and pursue development in a way that is commensurate with our limited economic and natural resources. That is why the commitments that we undertook at the Barbados Conference in 1994 remain very important to us and have constituted basic elements

in the definition of our national development policies and the creation of our national environmental strategy. Despite the fact that Cuba has been subjected for almost four decades to an unrelenting and genocidal economic, commercial and financial blockade by the Government of the United States, made worse by extraterritorial laws such as the Helms-Burton law, our country is carrying out, as a matter of priority, a policy designed to achieve sustainable development.

Cuba has been dealing with a serious economic crisis that it is currently in the process of overcoming systematically and steadfastly. That crisis has not led us to abandon our environmental goals and principles or to relinquish our search for sustainability. Our country accords great importance to the efforts carried out at the regional level in order to support the Barbados Programme of Action. Recent natural disasters that have affected the small island developing States in various geographical areas have reinforced our belief that we must develop and consolidate regional cooperation mechanisms that will allow nations to overcome the consequences of such disasters. The recent adoption of a regional cooperation agreement for the Caribbean relating to natural disasters, carried out within the framework of the Association of Caribbean States, is a clear demonstration of our decision to find solutions on the basis of integration. In this respect, we must highlight the adoption of the declaration on sustainable tourism in the Caribbean. Cuba fully supports the initiative presented by the Group of 77 and China to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, and we urge all Member States to join this effort.

It is obvious that without the effective support of the international community we will not achieve much in the way of results from the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. We have said before, and will continue to do so, that it is necessary for the developed countries to face up to the ecological debt they have incurred with humanity and to comply with their financial commitments with regard to official development assistance. It is imperative that donors provide adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources and carry out environmentally friendly technology transfers in favourable conditions.

I should like to repeat that it is our firm intention to continue to make all possible efforts in order to attain the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action at the national level as well as to contribute — as we have been doing — our experience and direct support so that the Programme will become a reality for our region and for all the small island States. We hope that this special session will confirm the importance of fully implementing the Barbados Programme of Action and that we will make decisions that will allow us to continue to do so more effectively.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): The subject of this special session, which concerns the development of small island States, is very close to Sri Lanka's heart. Sri Lanka is an island; it is not a large island, but a small island. Indeed, I have often wondered why Sri Lanka is not itself a member of the group known as the Alliance of Small Island States. I am told that the reasons may be that the surface area and population of Sri Lanka are somewhat larger than those required by the relevant criteria.

Many of the questions presently within the focus of the attention of this special session of the General Assembly relating to factors that affect the sustainable development of small island developing States also preoccupy development planners in Sri Lanka. They include energy dependence on costly oil imports and the necessity of alternative sources of energy; the proper management of tourism in the light of the needs of the environment and of a precious cultural heritage; the fragility of coastal ecosystems, including the special circumstances of coral reefs; sea-water seepage in low-lying coastal areas into sources of fresh water — streams, rivers and aquifers — for household and agricultural use; a rise in the level and temperature of the sea, with serious consequences for coastal communities; and torrential rainfalls at the wrong time of the year. The adequate management of the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf, of course, raise problems of great magnitude for Sri Lanka, as they do for numerous other small island developing States.

Yet we are informed that there is also the awesome reality for the very low-lying small islands — of which there are many, including Maldives in the Indian Ocean — of rising seas submerging surface areas and, possibly, entire islands. Sri Lanka therefore offers its wholehearted support to the convening of this special session of the General Assembly to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing

States since the adoption in Barbados in 1994 of what has come to be known as the Barbados Programme of Action. It constitutes an appeal — a vast and very moving appeal — from some 40 States Members of the United Nations, first for an understanding of the unique and very difficult circumstances in which the small island developing States find themselves and, secondly, for such assistance as each of their colleague Member States may be in a position to provide.

While Sri Lanka, regrettably, is not in a position to be a source of funding because of other heavy demands on its resources, I would assure the Assembly that Sri Lanka is in a position — and is eager — to extend such other relevant cooperation and assistance as it may be able to provide. The channels for such cooperative assistance are many, including the United Nations system of organizations and, in particular I would think, the process of South-South cooperation. They also include regional organizations such as, in the Indian Ocean region, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, of which the Maldives is a valued member, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, of which Bahrain, the Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles and Singapore are members. There is also the Commonwealth and its secretariat, encompassing a large number of small island developing States that at one time were, like Sri Lanka, colonial territories.

I would hope that through such channels cooperative assistance will flow and will relieve, at least in some measure, the great difficulties of which so many small island developing States have spoken so eloquently at this special session of the General Assembly.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Duminasa Shadrack Kumalo, Chairman of the delegation of South Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): It is always a joy and a pleasure, Sir, to see you sitting up there at the head of the General Assembly.

At the Barbados Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the international community decided to give special priority to the situations and the needs of small island developing States in the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. This special session provides an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm and strengthen its commitment to the sustainable development of small island developing States. South Africa believes that by building on the progress already achieved, this special session should give further impetus to the effective and successful implementation of the Programme of Action at all levels.

The Barbados Programme of Action provides a firm and comprehensive basis for the sustainable development of small island developing States. South Africa recognizes that these States have made significant progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action. However, we also fully recognize the responsibility of the international community to assist these States to achieve sustainable development, in particular by providing adequate new and additional resources for the full and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action.

At the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held at Durban, South Africa, last year, heads of State or Government of the Movement reaffirmed the need for the provision of adequate, predictable new and additional financial resources, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies on concessional and preferential terms, and the promotion of non-discriminatory trading arrangements. In that regard, the ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement which was held last week here at the United Nations, noted with concern that the support of the international community for the implementation of the Programme of Action has been affected by financial and other resource constraints, and by global economic and environmental factors. The meeting of donors and small island developing States held at the United Nations in February 1999 made a welcome contribution in that regard. However, there is a need for concrete follow-up of the results and outcomes of that meeting.

Sustainable development in small islands is complicated by their size, their limited resources, their geographical dispersion, their isolation and their ecological fragility. Global warming and associated phenomena such as sea-level rise render small islands more vulnerable to storms and floods. The frequency and intensity of natural disasters and the devastating effects they have on small island developing States further underscore the vulnerability of those States. In this regard, the organizational arrangements that were established in the course of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction provide a viable framework for international cooperation aimed at natural disaster reduction.

Vulnerability in its various manifestations is obviously one of the main obstacles to the sustainable

development of small island developing States. South Africa believes that the United Nations should facilitate the timely conclusion of a vulnerability index that takes into account the environmental and economic vulnerability of small island developing States. Recognizing the importance of the Barbados Programme of Action in identifying and addressing the problems and vulnerability of small island developing States, heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, at the Durban Summit, reiterated their call for the support of the international community in the implementation of the Programme of Action, including the ongoing initiative to establish a vulnerability index for small island developing States.

The particular constraints on small island developing States make it difficult for them to achieve sustainable development or to benefit from globalization and trade liberalization. Hence, the international system should assist those States in improving their competitiveness, their market access and the diversification of their economies, and in building their capacity for effective participation in multilateral trade. It is critical that the international community, including the monetary, financial and trading system, not only recognize the limitations and vulnerability of small island developing States, but also address them, to facilitate their integration into the world economy.

South Africa welcomes this opportunity to review and appraise the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We are looking forward to a constructive and productive session under your competent presidency, Sir. This five-year review presents an excellent opportunity for the international community to take stock of where we have achieved success and of what we still need to do to make progress in the future. We should seize this moment.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Jacques Baudin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal.

Mr. Baudin (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I wish first of all to voice my support for the views stated by His Excellency Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, President of the Republic of Guyana, who addressed the Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My statement today is first and foremost a message of sympathy and solidarity addressed to the States Members of the United Nations that are part of the Alliance of Small Island States. As a coastal State, with its western coast on the Atlantic Ocean, Senegal is fully aware of the obstacles hampering the progress of small island developing States towards sustainable development. For, like our island friends, we too suffer as a result of phenomena relating to marine and coastal environmental degradation.

Five years ago, the international community, inspired by the principles and commitments of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, adopted the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. It recognized therein the specific concerns and needs of those countries and their particular vulnerability because of various factors: climate change, marine pollution, coastal erosion, isolation, disruption of ecosystems, natural disasters, and so forth. All these risks, and phenomena, added to the pressures created by populations being confined in a small area, require urgent mobilization on the part of the international community to ensure the well-being of present and future generations.

The Barbados Programme of Action contains a coherent set of short- medium- and long-term measures that small island developing States, in partnership with the international community, should take in order to reverse trends that have an adverse impact on their efforts to attain the objectives of sustainable development. The Secretariat's reports to the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development describe the current state of progress made since the Barbados Conference. My delegation hails the efforts made at the national, regional and international levels to implement the Barbados Programme of Action. In such vital areas as drinking water supply, energy, transport and telecommunications, to mention only a few, significant progress has been made in recent years, varying, of course, from one country to another.

But it is clear that much remains to be done to change the way things are going, to prevent problems that can be controlled, to manage what has been achieved and, thus, to protect small island developing States from the uncertainty of the future. This means increased mobilization of resources. The Secretary-General as stated in his report that climatic change and rising sea levels, biological diversity and waste management are the three sectors where fewest resources have been allocated.

Yet it is undeniably true that these are the areas where the vulnerability of small island developing States is most acute, because these phenomena touch the very integrity of these States, threatening their very existence

as separate physical entities. My delegation endorses the Secretary-General's conclusion calling for additional financial resources to be contributed in the form of official development assistance to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

Five years after Barbados, island peoples are still listening to our debates, but no longer as a passive and resigned audience at a performance where they are merely spectators. Rather, they are now real actors, bold actors, tirelessly playing their part every day in a performance where there is no room for fiction. The gravity and urgency of the questions that we are discussing here are clear to these millions of men and women, because they are matters of survival in the face of rising dangers. In a world of interdependence, the natural beauty of the islands, their cultural wealth, their biological diversity — all of this constitutes an integral heritage that we must all protect, together, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

It is possible to take up this challenge; we have the means. So let us together ensure that at the end of this special session the Barbados Programme of Action will be squarely framed in an action-oriented approach, in the genuine interests of the peoples on whose behalf it was adopted.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jaime Gama, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

Mr. Gama (Portugal): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with the statement of Finland made yesterday on behalf of the European Union.

Five years have passed since the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States was convened in Barbados. The moment has therefore come to assess the state of implementation of the constitutional charter of this group of countries, the Barbados Programme of Action, and to reflect upon their achievements in recent years, as well as the new challenges they face in coming times.

My Government shares the common goal of the sustainable development of small island developing States and believes in the advantages of their full participation and responsibility in the sustainable management of the world's environment, specifically, with regard to the oceans and coastal environment.

As a country with a considerable coastline and two archipelagos — the Azores, where I was born, and Madeira — Portugal has no doubt about the strategic importance of marine resources for small island developing States. These countries not only represent a valuable development asset to the international community as a whole, but are also charged with significant responsibility for a vast portion of the world's oceans and seas.

In the field of climate change and sea level rise, Portugal expresses its concern for the particular vulnerability of small island developing States and acknowledges the efforts of many of them in developing specific policies and strategies for climate change with the assistance of regional and international organizations.

Since the adoption of the Barbados Programme of Action, growing external factors, other than environmental changes, have been affecting many small island developing States. Globalization and trade liberalization have had an undeniable impact on them, especially on the least developed ones.

Bearing in mind the importance of assisting small island developing States in their sustainable development strategies, with special attention to the least developed and most environmentally vulnerable, my Government has for a long time had a policy of assistance and cooperation with some of them, namely, Sao Tome and Principe and Cape Verde.

We look forward to extending such assistance to East Timor, as we firmly believe it will soon be granted the right to join the group of small island developing States as a new member of the international community of sovereign States. Such assistance is based on the development and implementation of specific integrated programmes aimed at addressing important needs of the recipient countries, as identified by their Governments, such as eradication of poverty; development of human resources and preservation of cultural identity; promotion of social and health conditions; support for social and economic development; support for the consolidation of national institutions; and development and implementation of financial cooperation.

Moreover, in the particular case of Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, my Government is also assisting in the implementation of programmes in the fields of sustainable integrated management of coastal areas and marine biodiversity. In order to have an integrated

approach, Portugal has been implementing these bilateral programmes in the framework of a vaster cooperation strategy developed with other donors, such as the European Union, the World Bank and some agencies of the United Nations system.

Allow me to conclude by expressing my satisfaction with the attention that this special session of the General Assembly is bringing to the specific problems and challenges facing small island developing States. I also take this opportunity to renew Portugal's commitment to further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and to express support for the key elements for future action that are identified during this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, as well as support for the new political declaration on small island developing States.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Motsoahae Thomas Thabane, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lesotho.

Mr. Thabane (Lesotho): It gives me great pleasure to address this Assembly regarding the sustainable development of small island developing States. The major issues faced by the small island developing States include vulnerability to the impact and consequences of climate change; ecological fragility and the vulnerability of small economies; the threat of recurrent damage inflicted by natural disasters; remoteness from major trading partners, which gives rise to high international transportation costs; the high cost per unit of social and physical infrastructure on account of low demand and suboptimal use; and inadequacy of investment resources for building critical infrastructure.

My delegation therefore supports the aspirations of the small island developing States to economic development and to improved living standards, as well as the conservation of their natural and cultural heritage for posterity. We ourselves are a small landlocked developing country with a fragile mountain ecosystem, and we are faced with the particular problems posed by lack of territorial access to the sea, which are aggravated by remoteness and isolation from world markets as a result of the prohibitive transportation costs associated with conditions of inadequate infrastructure. Therefore, the Kingdom of Lesotho can fully empathize with the small island developing States' vulnerabilities and peculiar characteristics, which make their difficulties so complex and severe. We feel that the international community needs to embark on further measures to support these countries in areas such as capacity-building, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and resource mobilization.

We all accept the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 as the blueprints for global sustainable development. Building on these blueprints, which affirm the principles of sustainable development and the international community's commitment to them, the Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States elaborated the principles and set out the development strategies required to protect the fragile environments of small island States.

My delegation therefore welcomes this review process and the consideration of the further implementation of the Programme of Action agreed to at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados from 25 April to 6 May 1994.

The Programme of Action undoubtedly remains a valuable and living framework for the sustainable development efforts being undertaken by small island developing States, and Lesotho notes with appreciation the actions taken by Governments, regional commissions and organizations, the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the Commonwealth in support of activities relating to the Programme's implementation.

Adequate financial resources at all levels remain crucial to the continued implementation of the Programme of Action. In this regard, resource mobilization remains a major challenge for small island developing States, and it must be addressed with new resolve by all partners if this twenty-second special session of the General Assembly is to provide the requisite impetus for the further implementation of the Programme of Action.

Regarding the challenges posed by climate change, it is the responsibility of all of us to work assiduously towards the elimination of greenhouse gases. In this connection, the forthcoming fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is an important milestone.

In conclusion, Lesotho has played a significant role in promoting the cause of small developing States, the vast majority of which are island States. The Deputy

Prime Minister of Lesotho was a member of a task force, established by the Commonwealth and headed by the Prime Minister of Barbados, to bring to the attention of the European Union, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization the vulnerability of small developing States in general and of small island developing States in particular. As a result of the analytical work undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat, a composite vulnerability index has been developed and brought to the attention of the bodies that I have just referred to, as well as to the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations. Lesotho therefore remains committed to efforts to alleviate the plight of small island developing States.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Snoussi, Chairman of the delegation of Morocco.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): In spite of the time limit that has been politely imposed upon us, allow me first of all once again to express the congratulations and best wishes of our delegation to you, Mr. President.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was undoubtedly one of the greatest summits of all times. It proved to be a turning point in the search for sustainable development, with the goal of protecting our planet and future generations from the consequences of the unbridled exploitation of non-renewable resources. In this context, it was decided to convene, in 1994, a world conference to examine specific problems of small island developing States and to establish the principles that are now contained in the Programme of Action and to transform these principles into practical policies that allow these States to achieve sustainable development.

The holding of this important special session of our Assembly is surely proof that the international community is firmly committed to working for the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action by encouraging concrete actions in priority fields such as climate change, natural catastrophes, freshwater resources, coastal and marine resources and, finally, energy and tourism. The international community thus continues to show that it is aware of the specific problems of small island developing States and that it has decided to resolutely support the efforts that these States are carrying out at the national and regional levels.

Small island developing States continue to face obstacles that arise from their geographical situation and that they cannot overcome without greater international cooperation. Their worthy efforts to achieve significant progress in the process of sustainable development are suffering enormously from problems related to their small size; their remoteness; their fragility; their vulnerability to climate change; the high costs of energy, infrastructure, transportation and communications; natural catastrophes; the lack of freshwater resources; and the overexploitation of fisheries. Small island developing States thus deserve the assistance of the international community, especially because they are the conscientious custodians of major parts of the oceans and of the biological diversity of our planet, and because they are involved in a fight to survive climate change and the rise in sea level that could result.

For all these reasons, we call on donor countries to mobilize their resources further in order to reinforce their cooperation with small island developing States by reversing the ongoing decrease in official development assistance as soon as possible and ensuring a greater investment of funds. In cooperation with the beneficiary countries, they should also coordinate their programmes to ensure the fulfilment of established objectives. These island States should be allowed greater access to the resources of the multilateral financial institutions, particularly the Global Environment Facility. Special assistance should also be considered to help these States adapt to globalization and trade liberalization, which have had a negative impact on them, given the decline in preferential trade practices.

In the area of technology and expertise, small island developing States need preferential and concessional access to eco-technologies, particularly to reduce the impact of greenhouse gases, so that they may exploit renewable energy sources, save energy, and reverse freshwater pollution and contamination by salt water.

With respect to the United Nations system, they could activate its participation in the work to establish a vulnerability index for the small island developing States by the year 2000, which would allow the international community to better appreciate the nature of the cooperation required by these countries.

Morocco reiterates its active solidarity with small island developing States and invites them to give South-South cooperation their particular attention. It is a necessary instrument to complement existing mechanisms, particularly in an international environment characterized by the scarcity of financial resources. Our country is willing to share its experience in the field of marine and freshwater resource management with the island States.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.